This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

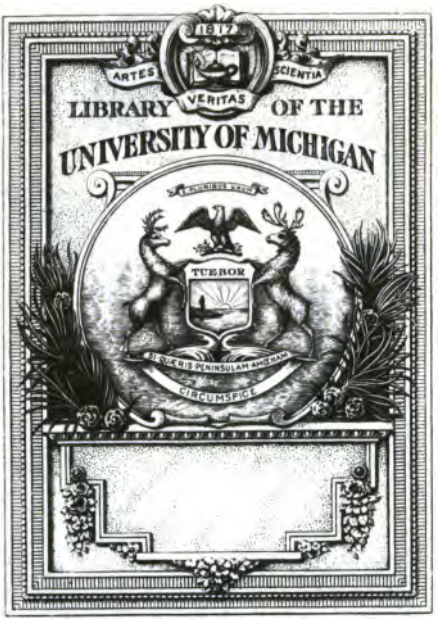
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



THE GIFT OF
William Warner Bishop

CAMP JOLLY

It sent the boat smashing into splinters against a sharp rock

Macaulay, Mrs. Fannie (Caldwell)

CAMP JOLLY

OR

THE SECRET-FINDERS IN THE GRAND CAÑON

BY

FRANCES LITTLE

(FANNIE CALDWELL MACAULAY)

ILLUSTRATED BY
C. M. RELYEA

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1917

Copyright, 1917, by
THE CENTURY CO.

Published, September, 1917

W. W. Bishop
1-6-39

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

It sent the boat smashing into splinters against a sharp rock . . . . . *Frontspiece*

"One little river do all that!" exclaimed Billy . 31

Every minute turned over a new leaf of wonder pictures 49

A better place for a camp could not have been found 79

The collie lay still, unable to move 115

A shaggy, little old man, as patched as his tent 143

"Why for did you keep that lamp so secret?" 179

Wildcat Pete 229

1-7-39 DOR

CAMP JOLLY, OR, THE SECRET-FINDERS IN THE GRAND CAÑON

CAMP JOLLY,

OR,

THE SECRET-FINDERS IN THE GRAND CAÑON

CHAPTER I

THE arch-plotter, the ringleader, was in disgrace. Ordinarily Billy's generous mouth was as full of persuasion as his face of freckles. Now, as he stood before his father, he had n't a word to say.

Billy thought his father the greatest man in the world. Did n't he go from one end of the country to the other digging up secrets of how the earth was made, then put these secrets into books that read like joyful romances? And did n't he write his name with a "Colonel" in front of it and "U. S. A." at the end?

Down in the deepest corner of his heart

Billy had a suspicion that he was the greatest boy in the world. He knew for certain that he led all the boys in Elkhurst, Kentucky, a small settlement of farmers and old First Regimenters many of whom had never seen a Pullman, and still drove oxen to their plows.

But for once twelve-year-old Billy, lean, alert, active, had some doubts about being great. Many times, even after the most outrageous conduct, when punishment seemed certain, Billy could use his clear, brown eyes with such effect on parent or teacher that liberty was the quick reward. As he was usually up to something, this power was his chief ally, which he worked for all it was worth. To-day it failed him. Silent, downcast, he rubbed one bare foot against the other, feeling very small and looking very sheepish. He could have reasoned it out with his mother, who was chief of home rule for boys. But she was not in the room, and his father, after a stern reprimand, turned his military back on him, reached for a book, and without even raising his head said to

a young woman at a type-writer by the window:

"Miss Breck, will you lock this young man in the attic bedroom and bring the key to me? Later I will decide what is to be done with him. Now, sir, march!"

Miss Breck's reckoning with Billy was probably far behind. She scored one as she walked up-stairs behind him.

"You 'll catch it this time sure, Billy. This is n't your mother,—Poor thing!—gone to bed with a headache over your misdoings. You took advantage of that. I don't believe you 've even washed to-day. Look behind your ears!"

Billy mustered up spirit enough to retort:

"Look behind your own!" But he walked into the room, which held nothing but an old mahogany bed, a dresser, and one chair, and allowed himself to be locked in.

And what was it all about, anyhow? Billy looked out of his dormer-window, and shook his fist in the direction of the next farm.

Taylor, the owner, was a silly old crank. Bet he never was young in his life. And his son Wat, a wishy-washy, goody-goody!

As far back as Billy could remember Taylor took it for granted that the boys would take his watermelons. At this planting he hid his patch. Searching for it had been great fun. There were plenty of melons at home, but the game was to slip to old Taylor's, seize a big, round fellow, run to the woods, and share it with the gang. Taylor could n't catch them. He was too wobbly. Even Billy's small cousin, chubby Teddy Colville, could outrun him. And Rags, chocolate-colored, bow-legged, friend and playmate, ran faster than anybody could say his whole name, which was Robert Lee Abe Lincoln George Washington Sherman.

Hunting for the patch had been a regular feature every summer. Once they had found it in a corn-field; then it had been planted right in front of Taylor's door, and he sat there with a shot-gun, too, after the things were ripe.

Those melons were the best yet. But this year had been the limit. His watermelon-patch was right on top of his house. If old Taylor had not toted up big wooden boxes! The boys had hunted and hunted, and found what the old man had done only when the vines began to come over the railing of that little flat place on the Taylor roof. Billy could see them that very minute. Of course they must get even, so they took it out on Wat. As for him, what were a few bee-stings, anyhow? A boy did n't *have* to go sit in an old surrey in the barn just because he was dared to, did he? Billy did n't believe it was half as bad as the Taylors made out. A doctor for a few bee-stings! And the drug-store man telling everybody that Wat was almost delirious with the pain!

And here he was locked up, a week of vacation gone, every day valuable, and everything just bursting with bloom and song and sunshine.

Solitary confinement, with no company but a feeling that this time something real in the

way of punishment was coming, did not suit Mr. William Hargrave. Something must be done. He leaned from the window and gave a bird-call. A real thrush answered. Another call, and a woolly head bobbed up from the gooseberry-bushes, and a second later, by its side, a sunny one.

Billy made signs. He pointed to a limb of the old chestnut that came within ten feet of his window. He tore his handkerchief, twisted it to look like a rope, hung it on a window-fixture, acted as if he were sliding down by his hands, and pointed to the barn. Teddy shook his head and waved his hands. Billy shook his fist at him. Rags, however, nodded violently, and set out for the barn. In a few minutes he came back with a piece of rope, a good-sized piece.

Billy saw that Rags could n't climb a tree with that rope, and he threw a goodly ball of string out of the window. More signals. Rags did n't understand. Teddy ventured near. The string was tied to the rope, and

Rags was made to button the ball inside his shirt and begin to climb. He reached the limb, drew up the rope, to which Teddy had tied a short-handled croquet-mallet. At the risk of his life Rags clung with curved legs to the branch, and threw the mallet so straight through the window that Billy had to dodge it. It was exciting. Being locked in was n't so tame, after all, and he could get out now whenever he chose.

A knock, a key turned, and a hand—he knew it for Miss Breck's by the amethyst ring on the first finger—put in a small waiter with food.

That was it, was it, a prisoner fed through a crack? Well, he 'd show 'em. Billy ate, and made a package of the remnants. He might need food before he was through. The old mahogany bedstead weighed a ton. It was not easy to move, but it stood the good rope tied around its trusty posts all the better. And the rope stood Billy, though he heard the bed scrape over the floor as he reached the ground; so he went in a run through old Tay-

lor's back corn-field as the shortest path to the den.

What's this? Two patches! The one on the housetop was a blind; this was the real one, twice as large as ever and just chock-full of bloom! Pressed for time as he was, Billy, pausing, plucked and scattered at least a peck of blossoms; then was off again. He ran, doubled on his tracks, breathed behind dump-heaps and bushes, and finally reached the place known only to himself, Teddy, and Rags—that secret place that all boys since the first boy dearly love. In this case it was a clever passage in an abandoned quarry, part natural, the rest boy, made by piling up tin cans and shale. Thick weeds shielded the entrance. As Billy pushed them aside he heard heavy breathing.

The secret place had been discovered by somebody else running to its shelter!

As he hesitated, he kicked a stone, and out rushed not another runaway, but old Snap himself.

Billy was as glad to see the terrier as if he had been marooned for months, Snap would not only be company, but could carry messages between the den and the gang.

Then Billy went to the inner chamber. It was simply the other end of the passage, made by falling rocks and giving a safe exit to pursued heroes.

Some boards formed a roof, a canvas flap hung over an exposed side, and the chamber contained cherished possessions. Three flat stones formed seats round the council table (a soap box on a pile of stones). Under stones and boxes were provisions for war and captivity, a lantern, matches. Billy looked for the candle, and remembered that they had used the last. If he had to spend the night here, he 'd need a light.

He knew how to get it. He removed a stone from the back wall, the quarry wall proper, and obtained paper of the brown grocery variety, a jar of black varnish, a pointed stick, and wrote, "ON SELDNAC

DNES PANS." This he put into an old tobacco-bag and tied to Snap's collar.

"Teddy! Home!" was all the dog needed to make him scamper off in the right direction.

"Good thing we trained him," said Billy, rubbing his hands.

As Billy waited, he gravely considered the situation. Should he really run away this time? If it was n't for his mother—well, he 'd spend the night in the den, anyhow. Teddy and Rags would come as soon as they could in the morning. Whatever he commanded they 'd have to do. They 'd elected him leader, and all three had bound themselves by the most solemn oath, signed and sealed, and buried right under that big rock in the corner, to stand by one another "In sickness and in health, through battle and murder and sudden death."

Snap was long in returning. Candle-time had almost come, and Billy's ever-ready appetite began to speak. A fresh wind blew, and of course an old owl had to begin hooting. Everything seemed lonely and dark.

At last Snap came; but instead of the expected candle, he carried another note, which said in plain, if straggly, English:

"Better come right back. Uncle seems to have had bad news; he 's forgot all about bees and you."

So Billy, curious and wondering, started for home. There was a light in his father's study, and the front door stood wide open. Slipping in, Billy stood in the shadow of the door, where he could see into the room. His father held an open letter in his hand. His mother, close by, looked troubled as she said:

"Poor child! I thought he was safe." And his father replied:

"The law is against us, and we have to face it. I 'll take Teddy myself, and we 'll do the best we can. Circumstances may change. If he wants money—"

"But we can't give up Teddy," said the mother.

"We may have to." The look on Colonel Hargrave's face was both sad and grim.

Billy's blood rose. He was bound by a solemn oath. He threw back his shoulders and stepped inside the door.

"Father, you may think I 'm too young and too bad to be told what this is all about. I 'm sorry about the bees; but wherever Teddy has to go, Rags and I go, too."

His father repressed a smile.

"I wish I could tell you, my son. You may know sometime what I myself don't know now entirely. And the best thing is to say nothing."

"But you won't separate us?" Billy urged.

For a moment it seemed as if a black shadow had slipped into the room. It did n't last long, however. Billy's mother was not only the best cloud-breaker that anybody ever knew, but she was so quick about it that she almost took a fellow's breath away.

"Thomas," she said, "the Government has ordered you to Arizona on that rock-formation investigation. Why not go earlier, and take all three of the boys with you? We should

gain time, and these boys certainly need a change—or something. While you work, they could play without getting into mischief—maybe."

Billy shouted with joy. He could n't help it. Think of it! Instead of punishment, he and Teddy and Rags were going on their first long journey, and to what his father always said was the wonder beauty-spot of the world. Maybe he was n't the greatest boy in the world, but surely he was the luckiest. He fled to spread the news.

CHAPTER II

THE morning of the departure arrived. The loaded spring-wagon, drawn by the big mule, had started hours before, and now the Hargrave family and its dependents were grouped about the family rockaway and its two fat, long-tailed carriage horses. There was a good deal of excitement, with a few sober adieus; but out of the corner of his eye Billy was sure that he saw joy and relief in some of the good-bys. At the division fence stood old Taylor, holding by the hand a small, bandaged boy who, from the liberal use of some brown application, had been made the color of Rags. And Miss Breck really could n't help showing that she was not grieved. She was wearing her best mustard-colored silk, and she had powdered her nose till it looked like a marshmallow.

Rag's mammy wept audibly as she hugged her young son.

"You ol' rascal, don't you go 'n' git et up by lions or scolloped by Injuns. If you do, I 'll give you the biggest whoppin' of your life."

Rags pulled away from the embrace, walled his eyes, and firmly declared 'fore gracious, he war 'n't goin' to get in eatin' distance of no ma lion nor pa lion.

The trip to the nearest country station seemed to be all too long; but once on the way to Louisville, there was plenty to see, and when the sleeper was boarded in that city, the head of the party began to have suspicions that he would have to enforce a few military rules if he kept perfect order with these lively youngsters. But when he saw the eager interest and heard their funny questions, he dived again into his own youth, and saw that he, too, was going to have a good time.

Billy Hargrave was in heaven. He hardly knew himself, he felt so quiet and thoughtful.

He was glued to the window. As it rounded curves, the long line of Pullmans was like a rippling ribbon of light, or a mighty dragon in a hurry to get where it was going. When he became tired of the window views and turned his attention to inside things, he decided that a sleeping-car was the most interesting thing he had ever seen. Neither he nor his young companions had ever before taken a whole day's journey from home.

"No bumping to speak of," he remarked to Teddy. "I had an idea we 'd be biffed about." Then he had to turn away from Teddy's happy, innocent face as he suddenly remembered the reason of the trip—the unseen danger threatening his cousin. But in a minute he pushed the ugly thought aside, and joined the others in firing questions at the colonel.

"Where does the train get its electric light?"

"How did they cook all those good things we had for dinner?"

"How much ice-water does it take for all

these people?" They were drinking it every few minutes.

"Do the fans have to be wound up and will they run after we all get to sleep?"

Before they got to the end of their questions Teddy spied an operation that seemed miraculous.

"Uncle, look! That waiter in the white jacket; he 's sliding all the seats off theirselves!"

"That 's the porter, Teddy, making up our beds."

At this three pairs of eyes opened widely, and three pairs of legs bore three boys to the scene of operations. They watched every phase of the performance and sheets, blankets, and mattresses brought from mysterious receptacles. When it came to the green curtains, Billy jumped up and down.

"I bid to sleep on the top shelf. Don't you, Teddy?"

Teddy agreed ecstatically, but Rags was

silent. He held his head very stiff, and rolled his eyes till they seemed all whites. Then he gravely asked:

"Marse Tom, does you say we-all has to sleep in them?"

"Why not? Don't you like the idea?"

"Why, Marse Tom, us boys ain't used to sleepin' in a hen-coop all fussed up wid petticoats."

Some passengers near by heard this, and joined in a hearty laugh. No one enjoyed it more than Rags. His heart was a merry one, and he dearly loved a laugh, even if the joke was on him.

"That 's all right, Rags," said the colonel, kindly. "You 'll sleep all right, I 'll promise you." He then ordered the trio to the dressing-room to make ready for the night; but there they found so many things that were surprising that, if it had n't been for Rags, morning would have come before they were ready. He opened his half-closed eyes long enough to say firmly:

"Looky here, boys, I 'se 'mos' wore out seein' new contraptions, 'n' I promise' yo' ma to take care of you. Hurry up now! Come 'long! See how you like roostin'."

When Rags used his "stubborn look," Teddy and Billy usually did as they were told without argument.

"Top shelf, Uncle Tom?" asked Teddy; but Billy had already answered the question by swinging himself up to the berth, and he now stuck out his head, calling:

"Gee, Teddy! hurry up! Here 's the bulliest hay-loft you ever saw!"

Rags said good night, but as he was led off by the porter he muttered:

"Ol' hen-house! No cheers, no spike hooks to hang clo'es on."

Billy made up his mind that he could not possibly sleep. He thought of the scene in his father's study. Had it happened only a week ago? He was a different boy. How small watermelons and bees seemed to-night, and what was Teddy to be saved from? It was no

use to question his father; but he had that promise to be told at the right time. Billy softly laid a protecting arm about his cousin, who stirred in his sleep and breathed, "Billy, ain't it great?"

And all in a moment it seemed to be morning and Chicago. Then came a scramble to get bags closed, hats and coats, a rush to the platform, a business of proper berths on the Overland Limited, and the second stage of the journey began.

Another day of enchantment, another night of oblivion, and the porter called out:

"Nex' stop Willyums Station. Change cyars for Gran' Cañon. Out de front do', please sir; and, ma'am, step lively, 'cause we 's two hours late, and maybe mo', fer all I know."

"That cullud genman sings a song like he 's givin' out a hymn-tune," remarked Rags. And almost before they knew it the limited was a streak in the distance, and the Hargrave party stood at the door of a little inn. Fray Mascos was its name, and it looked so quaint

and bright and Spanishy that it might have been a bit of old Madrid come to America for a holiday.

Without knowing it, the three boys had a lesson in history, learning that Fray Mascos was a kind, brave priest from Spain who had wonderful adventures, and had weathered so many plucky, strange situations that now, hundreds of years after, when the bands of steel had bound the Atlantic to the Pacific, his name shone in gold letters over the little hotel built for the comfort and refreshment of weary travelers on the sandy stretches of Arizona. Seated around the breakfast-table in a cool, shadowy room, bright with blankets, tomahawks, and pottery, the boys listened to every word.

There were stories for you! Struggles through heat that fairly cooked the flesh off the bones, of sand-storms that cut like whips, to say nothing of Indians who had been ever on the watch to slay the pale-faced intruders. The boys thought somebody ought to make a

saint or something out of that old priest, and, when leaving, looked long at the gold letters bearing the magic name.

Later on, when they were seated in the Grand Cañon train, and saw the San Francisco Peaks, with thick snow-caps tied over their towering heads; the Clenched Fist Mountain, looking like the red hand of a giant blacksmith; the herds of cattle and sheep and horses; and the bright patches of flower carpets, the boys forgot to be sorry for Fray Mascos. He must have had lots of fun, even if he had been blistering hot and had had to fight Indians.

" 'T ain't every boy," said Billy, profoundly, "that can one minute ride across prairies and things and the next minute be slipping through a forest so thick and dark that it looks like supper-time when it 's only middle of the day." Then, as the train came to the edge of the great Coconino Forest, Billy gave such a whoop that everybody near thought something had happened.

"Father! Look! Quick!"

A deer, two deer, then a whole family of deer!

Teddy nearly fell out of the window.

"That one 's the baby," he said. "Don't you wish we could take him home?"

But Rags rolled his eyes widely, sidewise, and up and down, and said warningly:

"Teddy, honey, you stop them foolish idees! You try once to ketch that little deer, an' you 'll be spiked clean through by his pa's long horns, to say nothin' to what his mammy 'll do if she once gits started."

And now the train had left the deep shadows of the tall trees, and was bearing them to a plain where there was nothing but miles and miles of sand dotted with little mounds, over which here and there an Indian, wrapped in a red blanket, seemed to be watching. The tiny hills were moving up and down. When the boys discovered this, they thought they were looking an earthquake straight in the face.

"My geography says that 's just the way an

earthquake rumples up the ground," Billy cried excitedly.

"Oh, does it?" said the colonel. "Well, Son, this is n't the home of earthquakes. The builders of those mounds are small, but they are about the busiest workers in the world—ants."

"Ants!" was the exclamation from three throats.

"Yes, ants."

"And those Indians sitting over them are they trapping them? What for?" asked Billy.

"Hardly," answered the colonel. "I 'll tell you what it all means if you will stop squirming and listen. Out here these small creatures live far under the ground. There are millions and millions of them in one community, and in each of those hills are thousands of rooms and galleries. What you see moving up and down are armies of ants carrying the loose sand to the top, grain by grain, and piling it up till it makes those mounds."

"Yes, Father," said impatient Billy; "but what are those Indians doing?"

"I am going to tell you if you stop interrupting. When the ants dig for their homes they make not only their own living, but help the Indians to make theirs. You can never guess how they do it."

Billy and Teddy shook their heads; but Rags bet *he* could if they 'd wait till he wished on his rabbit's foot.

As this would take time, and nobody could wait, the colonel continued:

"Well, the ants bring up sand, and along with it they bring up quantities of small stones. The Indians have learned that these stones are valuable to the whites, so they sit on the mounds till they fill their baskets. Then they polish the stones, sell them, and feast on the profits."

"But what are the stones? Granite or sandstone?" asked Billy, naming the kinds he knew best.

"Rubies and garnets and peridots," answered the colonel, chuckling at the surprise on the faces before him.

"Le' 's buy red paint and turn Injun," said Rags.

A long whistle cut off replies.

"Grand Cañon!" shouted the brakeman as the train stopped.

In a few moments the party was ascending a flight of steps which wound through trees and flower-beds, ending finally at the entrance to a fine hotel. The doors swung open, and the boys found themselves in a wonderful place. A roaring fire danced up a huge chimney; every chair and bench held a gay blanket. Tables were piled with pictures, and Indian girls in brightly beaded coats and dresses slipped about on soft moccasins. Everywhere, on walls, in corners, between chairs, were elk, buffalo, and mountain sheep, stuffed, to be sure, but so lifelike that they seemed to be only waiting to say "Howdy."

Billy and Teddy ran about trying to see

everything at once, while the colonel stood at the desk talking with the clerk. The latter struck a bell, and up popped from nowhere some Japanese boys, who made a rush for the baggage that Rags was guarding. When the first bag was lifted, Rags snatched it back, and showed fight.

"Looky here, you punkin'-colored monkey, go 'way from here! That 's Marse Tom's bag. Go 'way, I says! Go 'way before I eats all them tin buttons offen yer jackets!"

The boy tried to explain, and that politely:

"I take to room-place. You come, too, by-by. All velly nice."

"No, 't ain't nice. You run!" And Rags grabbed one of the bags that the small son of Nippon held. As neither would let go, it looked as if there would be warfare between Africa and Japan when the colonel turned umpire and settled the matter. But Rags followed those boys until every piece was safely up-stairs.

Nobody but prudish people wear dress-up

clothes in the cañon. Before the minute-hand of the clock could slip round half an hour the three boys had donned their cow-boy suits and wide-brimmed hats.

"Don't we three look like twins?" gleefully asked Billy.

"I bet 'most anybody 'll be kind o' 'fraid of us," said Teddy.

"Yes, they will," said Colonel Hargrave, joining them, dressed in khaki. "Now come on, boys, and we 'll see whether *we* shall be afraid of anything."

It was an old story to Colonel Hargrave, but Billy and his two companions gazed in silence as they stood on the very edge of a sharp, overhanging rock and looked down into one of the great marvels of the world. They saw a chasm, wide and deep and long, as pink as a rose and as unreal as a dream. Far down below a tiny streak of silver shone in the sun. That was the Colorado River, the stream that, the colonel explained, for ages and ages had been tearing and slashing and cutting at red

"One little river do all that!" exclaimed Billy

rocks and white ones, at high cliffs and low ones, till it had worn places big enough to swallow city after city.

"One little river do all that!" exclaimed Billy. "It must 'a' been tearing mad."

The colonel said that was just it; but, he added, its rage had made a place so beautiful and strange that people came from all over the world to see it, holding their breath in awe and admiration when they looked.

That is what Billy and Teddy did, leaning as far over as they dared, in order to see as much as they could, not knowing that it would take almost a lifetime to see it all.

Rags stood back and very carefully peeped over. He was n't "one mite afraid, but it 's plumb foolish to tickle danger when danger ain't ticklin' you." Rags liked big words, but now he could not think of one suited to the occasion. He clapped his hand to his head, and after a second burst out with:

"Cracky-loo! what a sink-hole!"

Billy was disgusted.

"That 's no sink-hole, Rags. It 's a cañon."

"A cannon!" exclaimed Rags. "Thought they was to shoot with. This 'n 's got shot full of holes before it ever had a chanst to bust loose."

"Not cannon, Rags—C A Ñ O N," and Billy wrote it in the sand.

The colonel and the boys stood long looking at this place of wonders, where great rocks took the shape of huge animals, vast temples, and even mighty cities in the distance.

"Father," said Billy, pointing, "who lives in all those houses over there?"

"They are not houses, William. Nobody could live there. They are rocks that the river has cut into curious shapes."

"I thought they were churches and things. Did n't you, Teddy?"

"Yes, I did. But what 's that thing crawling along 'way down there on that little path?"

"Those, Teddy, are the tourists that left here this morning on horseback."

"You mean they are ladies and gentlemen and real horses? Why, Uncle Tom, they don't look as big as the animals in my Noah's Ark."

"That 's the way we shall look when we go down to-morrow."

At this, Rags clasped his hands, and with a mournful look over the precipice said:

"Marse Tom, is that where you 's goin' to take us all?"

"Yes, my work calls me to the very bottom of the cañon, and up and down."

"Well it is sho' blest with plenty of up and down. I hope I can find something steady to plant my feet on when we gets to the bottomest bottom."

"You 'll have a chance at something very solid. You boys play around here awhile. I 'm going to make arrangements for an early morning start."

"I wish it was morning now," cried Billy. "Won't it be the grandest fun to go down there!"

"Looky here, Billy Hargrave," warned Rags, "be keerful how you wishes things. There 's somethin' down that pink hole besides grandness, or I ain't no fortune-teller."

Rags little knew what was in store for them.

CHAPTER III

THE next morning Billy and Teddy and Rags were standing behind the colonel, who was talking with the hotel clerk, when a man strolled in who looked exactly as if he had stepped from a Wild-West poster. He walked straight to Colonel Hargrave, saying:

"I suppose you are the gentleman with the kids that wrote for a guide on the camping hike."

The colonel said he was.

"I 'm your man. Donkeys is loaded, and mules is saddled. When d 'ye start?"

"Right away. What is your name?"

"They call me Wildcat Pete."

Three boys stared in wonder. Billy nudged Teddy.

"What a bully name for a cow-boy! Wonder if he 's wild as he looks!" he said.

For Wildcat Pete had a nice drawl and a face that, though crisscrossed with scars and burned by the desert sun, had a kind look. The boys did not discover till later that this young giant was a waif of the desert who, with nothing to go on for and nobody to care whether he lived or died, had fought for life so fiercely and had performed such daring deeds that he had earned his name many times.

He proposed that the party should start at once, going slowly down the trail, stopping over at the Indian Gardens for the night. Billy began to fire questions, but his father headed him off with:

"All right. Pete's the boss, and he says we must start. Now, boys, leave everything here we do not actually need till we return. Ready?"

Fat legs and thin ones raced to rooms. Pockets were stuffed with knives, strings, fish-hooks, and nails, buckeye in one of them, with a rabbit's foot, for good luck. Small suitcases almost as bulgy as the pockets were seized,

and a rush was made for outside, where Pete and the donkeys waited. It was like a Wild West show again when they started down the cañon. Billy and his companions found out, first of all, the difference between choosing a donkey and a donkey choosing a rider, for Pete said each should choose his own burro. Billy looked them over and chose the biggest, a brown, fat fellow that turned its head and rubbed Billy's shoulder in so friendly a fashion that the boy had to give him a good hug before he got into the saddle. Teddy chose the next fattest one, and found it as friendly as Billy's.

Then came Rag's turn. In the lot was the blackest, meekest-looking little burro in the world, and, without so much as a "by your leave," Rags jumped astride, and dug his heels into Blackie's sides. The result was surprising. The burro in a flash put all four feet together, and made a camel-hump of his back, sending Rags flying through the air.

Almost before the boy's body struck a bed of pine-needles he was up, all the inheritance

of his race for conquering the horse roused. Before the colonel could protest he was astride again.

Blackie bucked, kicked, wheeled, side-stepped. Rags threw his arms round his neck, and screwed his heels into the slick sides. Mules and burros may have minds of their own, but so have negroes when it comes to conquering them. Both are sometimes as hard-headed as a whole brick-yard.

It was right here that Wildcat Pete showed how well he knew his business. When he saw Blackie bucking and Rags going up and down like a jumping-jack, he did not interfere. A crowd had gathered from the hotel, shouting encouragement to the boy.

Blackie used all the tricks he knew to rid himself of his burden, fancy curves and double outshoots; then tried the worst trick of all: he started rolling.

Pete gave just one command, but it was so loud and fierce that Blackie suddenly stopped his antics, and with all the other burros fell

into line as straight as soldiers on parade.

"Do you want to change, Rags?" asked Pete.

"No, sirree. I 'll hang on to this here circus pony or go to the horspital."

The crowd cheered, and Rags puffed out his chest and sat upright.

When everything was ready Pete gave the word, and the procession started, Billy rode behind his father, followed by Teddy and Rags; then came the pack-mules, carrying all things needful for a camping trip of at least four weeks. Pete came last, and his every order was instantly obeyed by man, boys, and burros.

The trail was no boulevard. In places it was n't more than a foot wide, and wound round and round, sometimes so close to the edge that one slip meant death. Looking down, one saw great trees become as saplings, and sheep as kittens.

"What 's become of all that wind?" asked Billy. "On top it was 'most blowing my eyebrows off."

It was true. The wind gods and the ruler of noises seemed to have counseled together and agreed to keep out. No matter how blustery and breezy it is above, when the descent is made, the wind has rocked itself to sleep.

Pete said he thought that was why this route had been named "The Bright Angel's Trail."

"What a nice name! I like it," said Billy. "Don't you others?"

"I like it," said Rags. "Same time I would n't mind if this here cow-path sometimes had a little mo' wideness."

It was a long trip and a slow one, but not a boy tired of it. How could they when every minute turned over a new leaf of wonder pictures? If the great and mighty rocks made a fellow feel small, there were the birds and moths and butterflies to make the little boy feel glad he was alive.

To Billy the chipmunks seemed to be out on a grand holiday. He saw them peeking out from their little hillside windows, scooting this

way and that, their bright eyes turned in curiosity on the invaders.

And eagles! Pete pointed out the huge nests clinging to cliffs, with the eagle parents on guard.

"Gee!" gasped Billy.

"What do you think it looks like?" asked the colonel.

"Like barrels and barrels of red paint and pink paint and green paint spilled down here," replied the boy.

As the party went down the thermometer went up. When big bunches of flowers began to pop out as perky and bright as you please, Teddy wanted to jump off his burro and fill his arms. Pete thought differently.

"Stay where you are, kids. See that green spot? That 's where we get down; not before. That 's Indian Gardens."

"What are those white specks?" asked Billy.

"Tents."

"Tents? Thought Injuns lived in wiggy-

wams," said Rags. "Them looks like mammy's dish-towels on the clothes-line. I has my 'pinions 'bout sleepin' in Injun Gardens. I promised mammy I war n't goin' to let 'em git my scalup. I ain't skeered,"—this to Teddy in a sort of aside,—"but you bet this darky don' shet no eye this night."

"Uncle Tom 's got a gun," said Teddy, "and Pete 's got a humpy pocket that looks like another."

Pete and Mr. Hargrave heard all and said nothing, only laughed. Billy and Teddy and Rags knew why when the long procession pulled up at the entrance of Indian Gardens.

What looked like tents proved to be tiny cottages with canvas tops. Instead of redmen in war-paint and feathers, out of the biggest house came one little lone Chinaman. Even he was different. He had no half-shaved head, no pigtail, no Chinese dress, but just a blue shirt and overalls, like those old Taylor wore when he was farming. Neither was his face what they had expected. In pictures the Chinese

look as though they could not smile. This one ran out to the travelers, bowing and grinning, talking in chopped-up Chinese-English.

"Me cooky, Hoo Lung. Master go journey. Me velly nize. Alle samee like you. Chow have got."

"Chow means food," said Colonel Hargrave. "All in favor say 'Aye'; contrary, 'No.' The ayes have it. Dismount!"

The boys tried to, but could not. They seemed glued to the burros' backs. So Hoo Lung, Pete, and the colonel assisted, and then there came groaning and moaning as the young riders attempted to use their legs as nature intended. Billy declared that his pins had turned to iron pokers. Teddy thought his were solid glass. "They 'd break if I tried to crook 'em," he declared.

Rags looked first at his legs and then at the burro, with a warning finger.

"Jest look what you gone and done, you black donkey, you! My laigs never was putty; now you done bent 'em more 'n ever."

But young muscles come to time quickly if they have half a chance, and these soon limbered up, and were in good enough order to move swiftly at the call for dinner.

There were so many things to see in that dining-room that table manners were forgotten. Eating and at the same time looking in every direction is like trying to go and come all at once. The rough log sides of the cabin were strung with arrow-heads, bright feathers, and wings of birds. Long strings of red pepper and dried herbs streaked the canvas roof; skins of wolves and foxes covered any vacancies. A great owl blinked from one cage, while a mocking-bird whistled his loudest from another. In and about slipped the Chinaman, passing dishes piled as hungry boys like best. He was cook, cheerful host, and friend to tourists, and chattered in his funny way, laughing when the boys laughed whether he understood or not.

The colonel had met him before. Billy and Teddy tried to talk to him, but his replies

sounded so funny that they nearly choked with giggles.

Rags alone was silent, rolling his eyes between mouthfuls until they looked like white marbles in a black pan.

Dinner over, the colonel suggested they go out and see Pete with the pack-train. Truly it was worth seeing. Not far from the cabin was a grassy spot inclosed in heavy rails. Clean straw was convenient, and a mountain brook invited the tired animals to drink. Pete dubbed and petted, talking the while to them as if they were children. There were two baby burros, and these followed him around, pulling his sleeve and nibbling his clothes until Pete thrust a hand to his hip-pocket and pulled out the big lump that Teddy had thought was a gun.

"Gee! it 's sugar!" said Billy.

"I knowed it all along," said Rags, loftily. "Think Marse Pete goin' to feed them kid mules with bullets and gunpowder?"

"Now, boys," said the colonel after they saw

that everything in the corral was happy, "in camp everybody must do his share of work; but as you are here for the night only, I 'll excuse you this afternoon, and you can do some exploring on your own account. Now listen; don't forget a word of what I have to say. That path over there is the beginning of a trail. That high cliff is Steamboat Mountain. When the sun gets behind that mountain don't stop a second; make a bee-line for Indian Gardens."

All nodded obedience.

"But, Father, please," said Billy, "I don't see why they call this Indian Gardens. Pete says there is n't a single Indian near here."

"That is true now, Billy; but there was a time when plenty of them lived right on this spot"

"Where are they now?"

"White men ran them away. Hustle along. I should n't be surprised if you ran right into an adventure."

It is hard to imagine the feelings of three

Every minute turned over a new leaf of wonder pictures

boys turned loose in the biggest chasm in the world, especially boys whose travels hitherto had been only in books. They started up the trail on a run, but soon slowed down, for the trail had a twist that fast consumed breath and muscle. First it went down, and seemed very easy; but in a twinkle it went up, and that took some hard pulling. A little way it was straight, then changed its mind and went as crooked as the crookedest lane. No matter what it did, it led to strange, wild places. Sometimes Teddy, Billy, and Rags seemed to be the only living things in that part of the world. They could hear no sound but their own voices, and if for fun they shouted, the echo was flung back so quickly that it seemed to hit them in the face. This was all right for a little while, but nobody likes it to be so still that the only sound to be heard is heart-beats. As they walked farther the listeners were glad enough to hear a tinkly-tinkly noise. Of course there was nothing to do but to find out what it was, and turning to one side, they saw

fifty feet above them a bank of maidenhair fern, and from it the pure water of a spring hidden away back in the earth dripped below into a rough stone trough. Day and night, winter and summer, fair weather or foul, this dripping keeps up a merry song of *tink, tonk, tunk; tink, tonk, tunk; tink, tonk tunk,* as it falls into the pool where goldfish flash in the sunlight as they swim in and out among the moss and floating lilies.

"Oh, it's a 'quarim! Come quick and look!" cried Teddy.

"No, honey," said Rags, as he took a good look; "'t ain't no 'quarim. It's jes' a fish-pon'. 'T is powerful good lookin', though."

Whether fish-pond or aquarium, the boys found enough to keep them busy for an hour. Eager for something new, they moved on, taking turns in guessing where the trail would lead them and what they would see when they got there. Once the answer came so suddenly that it almost tumbled the youngsters over.

At a sharp turn a great hole in the wall faced

them. They had to stop, and I am sure they wanted to. The cavern looked as black as night and as spooky as a ghost-story.

"What *is* it?" asked Billy in a whisper.

"Bet I knows. It 's one of dem 'ventures Marse Tom said we 'd fin'. Don't ketch me foolin' wid hit." At this Billy just had to laugh.

"Why, Rags, an adventure is something you do; this is just to see. Maybe it 's a cavern."

"Can't help it, Billy. Bet you dat hole is a 'venture, and I ain't carin' nothin' 'bout seein' inside hit."

"Oh, come on! Let 's go in!" urged Billy.

Teddy hung back.

"S'pose it 's a bear house. They 'd eat us up."

"Yes, sirree, dey might, an' my mammy ain't got but one Rags. Now, Billy you come on. Leave dat cavernous erlone."

"Ah, shoo!" scoffed William. "It 's not deep. I can see the back and all around."

It took some coaxing, though, to get the other two to come. Step by step the boys made their way into the place of mystery in their concern as to whether bears lived there. Once in, they ran from place to place, shouting with joy at the things they saw. A huge, wide rock made the smooth floor. Here and there were smoke-blackened stones, showing where great fires had once burned. Rude seats were cut into the rocks, and over every inch of the brownish red walls wonderful pictures were carved—pictures of deer and men and women, of mountain sheep and buffalo. Long, wavy lines might have been snake pictures, but there was no mistaking the rain-clouds, the lightning, and the many-legged reptiles.

"O, Billy, it 's an Indian house sure!"

Rags had another idea.

"No, Teddy, hit ain't. Human pussons don't *live* in here. Dey hides. It 's a robbers' cave! I knows 'em when I sees 'em. Dem pictures is signs dey has for one ernuther. See dat racin' horse? Hit say, 'He

is comin'.' See de long line? Hit say he got er rope. Men and women pictures is all kin folks, an' tells de robbers where dey is. Dat 's hit sho. I 's goin'."

Rags seemed to be very sure. Teddy and Billy said nothing, but they slowly followed him out of the cave. And maybe to this day they would have thought Rags the very smartest boy they knew if it had n't been for a sign. Just a plain board sign, with some lettering on it, hung at one side of the entrance. Billy spied it and began to read: "This grotto was once the home of an ancient tribe of Blue Water Indians. The pictures carved by them on the wall tell the story of their great hunts and battles."

"Now, Mr. Robert Abraham George Sherman, where 's your robbers and your sheriff and your rope?" shouted Billy, glad enough to have somebody to tease. But Robert Abraham rather liked the teasing; it always gave him another chance.

"Go 'long, Bill Willyum! How 's I ter

know you spelled dat readin' right? Anyhow, Injuns can be robbers, and mens and womens an' sher'f, jes like we-all. Can't dey, Teddy?"

"'Course they can. And I think Indian robbers lots nicer. We can see black and white ones any old time. Wish we could see a red one."

But whether the best robbers were black or yellow or blue, the cave, with its strange pictographs, held history and mystery. The boys went over it and over it, tracing out the pictures, and making up stories to suit themselves, wilder than the wildest tribe could ever live.

The grotto grew dim. The pictures could barely be traced. Then came a red streak, lighting up the place from pit to dome. It was a wigwag from the sun, saying he was just about to slip behind the tallest mast of Steamboat Mountain. When he did, night would come racing with a black mantle to lay over the cañon. But the wanderers remembered the

colonel's warning, promptly obeyed the signal, and returned quickly to Indian Gardens. The longest-legged shadow in the cañon could n't catch them, race as it would.

CHAPTER IV

SOMETHING awoke Billy before the sun was up. It may have been the tail end of a dream, but he thought it was the end of Hoo Lung's shirt disappearing through the tent opening. Then he went to sleep again, and did not remember until the party was ready to start and Hoo Lung stood bowing and grinning.

"Did you come into the tent before we were up this morning, Hoo Lung? I thought I saw you."

The Chinaman nearly nodded his head off.

"Ya-as, me come, you sleep velly nize. Some time you fine nize plesent."

Hoo Lung's air of mystery fired Billy's curiosity almost to the blazing point, but he had not time to gratify it, for just then Pete gave

orders for the train. Hoo Lung only waved a farewell and called out:

"Good-by, lil' boys! Good-by, great Colonel. Hoop-la! Gran' time you have!"

"Good-by, Hoo Lung! Thank you for the arrow-heads," called Teddy.

"And for everything," said Billy.

"Thanky, too," Rags said, then softly aside, "Mr. Slant-eye, but I sho' is glad your color ain't mine."

Looking back, they could see Hoo Lung waving a farewell dish-towel until a turn in the road shut him from sight.

"See here, Rags," said the colonel, "I noticed you did n't go very near Hoo Lung. Were you afraid of him?"

Rags answered solemnly:

"Naw, sirree! 'T war n't no 'fraidness. I is jes natch'ly keerful when I meet a gen'man with his eyes tacked on de bias to his skull so he can't smile right good."

Everybody laughed, and, once started, everything made everybody laugh. The morning

was made for fun and joy. A few days ago, at home, spring had not finished her greeting to summer; down here in the cradle of the cañon summer was enthroned, and all living things, in a festival of color, were paying her homage. Had prizes been offered, the bird orchestra would have won. Usually the feathered members were not on singing terms with one another, but on this glorious morning all quarrels were forgotten. The cañon wren piped his flutey note right by the side of the blue-winged, screaming jay; and the mocking-bird, catching up the notes of each, made a song of his own. Moths and humming-birds rose in little colored clouds before the oncoming train. One brilliant butterfly settled on the tip of Blackie's nose. He stood it with a little toss; but stopping at a certain point in the road, he brayed five times. He blew the butterfly out of sight and silenced the birds. Loud and long those brays reverberated. The travelers covered their ears, and it took Pete's fiercest yells to make the burro walk on.

"Say, Rags," said Billy when he could be heard, "I 've got a conundrum for you. See if you can guess it."

"Spec' I knows the answer already; but go 'long and say it."

"Why would telephone be a good name for Blackie?"

" 'Cause he tells all he knows — through his nose?"

"Pretty good!" said the colonel, and laughed.

"That 's no answer," said Teddy. "It 's because his mouth is always open."

"Good again," said Pete. "Which is right?"

"Neither. I 've got you. Give it up?" asked Billy. "It 's because you can hear him from one end of the line to the other."

"My lands, Billy, you is smart!" cried Rags, delightedly. "Bet you is president of the Jockey Club, or some other kind of king, some day."

"Kids," said Wild-cat Pete, "you can change Blackie's name to Telephone or anything you

likes, but you 'll never change his habits. Him and me 's been coming down this trail together for ten years, and he 's never once missed braying at that very spot."

"What makes him do it?" asked Billy.

"He ain't never told me. When he comes to that spot he just ups and does it, long and loud and exactly five times. Sometimes I 've thought it was a kind of hallelujah because he 's coming to Jacob's Ladder."

"What 's Jacob's Ladder?" came a chorus from the boys.

Before answering, Wild-cat Pete dismounted.

"You can see for yourselves. Here we are at the top of it now."

The boys looked down, and saw a narrow path in a deep gulch, with steep, slippery sides cut in the rocks. It was as crooked as a corkscrew.

"Who-ee! Do we have to go down there? We 'll fall off sure."

"You won't have a chance," said the colonel.

"We walk, while Pete leads the pack down."

Any one could call it a walk, but it was really a wild scramble. Slipping and tumbling, grabbing at something that was n't there, sitting down suddenly, getting up slowly, the three boys and the colonel landed on a small plateau much out of breath, but unhurt, and glad of the fun.

They sat down to wait for Pete. The burros knew where they were, and would n't be hurried down Jacob's Ladder even had there been an earthquake behind them and oats in front. Ted and Rags lay full length on a soft, grassy spot,—it was the only way they could see the top of the cañon's steep walls,—but Billy had too many things to ask, so he sat by his father and questioned.

How did those red pillars about ten times as high as the soldiers' monument at home get there? Where did those splendid temples and castles with towers and battlements come from and what were they for? But before he could be answered he exclaimed:

"O, Father, what makes those rocks look as if they were sitting down and looking up into the sky?"

"It takes a good-sized volume to answer that question. Scientists say one thing, Indians another. As far as we know, the Indians were the first people here. They have a legend about the cañon that I 'll tell you some time."

"Tell it now, please, Father."

And Rags and Teddy also entreating, the colonel told this tale:

"Long, long ago there lived a great, wise chief who had a wife whom he loved better than anything else on earth. She became ill. He prayed to the Great Spirit to make her well, and had the most learned medicine-men in the tribes use their skill and make their incantations to the gods. But she died. The chief mourned and mourned; he took no interest in the tribes; he did not care to hunt, to fish; he hardly touched food. To his people it seemed that they were chiefless and that the great tribe, once so powerful, would go to pieces or break

up into smaller tribes, each with its own chief. They implored him to think of his people and rule them as of old, but he only prayed to his gods the harder:

"'Give me back my wife or take me to her!'

"One of the gods, being moved by the prayers one night when the harvest moon shone brightest, appeared before the chief.

"'Give me back my wife or take me to her!' implored the chief.

"'Your wife has gone to the happy lands,' said the god.

"'Where are the happy lands?' asked the chief.

"'If I take you there, will you cease to mourn, and care for your people as of old?'

"The chief promised that he would.

"'And will you also promise that you will never, never show the way to the happy lands to any one else or reveal the sights your eyes will see?'

"The chief again promised, and the god made a trail and guided him through until they

reached a most beautiful country, where his spirit wife ran to meet him. The glories of that country were so great, and the chief was so happy at having his beloved wife again, that he repeated his oath never to tell a living soul, knowing full well that, if he did, every Indian would want to go to see the happy lands before the time was ripe.

"The Indian gods were very wise, so they did not entirely trust even the great chief. To guard the entrance to the trail, they rolled a raging stream into the gorge that would swallow everybody who tried to pass it. That 's it down there. We call it the Colorado River, and you are in the happy lands now."

"Is n't that great!" said Teddy. "I bet the scientist fellows' story can't hold a candle to the Indians'."

"The scientists know precious little," said the colonel. "Nature has taken thousands of years to make this wonderland, and she does n't purpose to tell her secrets in a hurry. I doubt whether we shall ever know all the tale, since

this land which you now see was once hidden under a vast ocean."

"But, Uncle Tom, where has the ocean gone?"

"Earthquakes and volcanoes have had something to do with its disappearance. With water on top, heat below, and a hot sun above, something had to happen. It was a long fight, but the result has been one of the wonders of the world—the Grand Cañon. All that is left of a mighty sea is the water in that deep, narrow bed at the foot of the cliffs. The river is still fighting gamely; it takes slices of rock and earth wherever it has a chance."

Rags, shaking his head, cast contemptuous glances downward.

"Marse Tom, you sholy ain't callin' that ditch down there a ribber?"

"Yes, Rags. Why not?"

"Nuthin', excep' ef I wus that little and they called me a ribber, I 'd try harder to act up to it."

"I bet you would. But here are Pete and

Blackie; so jump up, and you 'll have a chance to act up all you want."

But Blackie proved tamer than a kitten. Maybe he was sleepy and did n't care; perhaps he was sorry for his former bad manners. Rag's private opinion was that the path was so steep that Blackie had something else to think about.

Slowly the little train picked its way down, and it was shadowy afternoon when Pete gave a shout:

"Do you hear her?"

Hear! Who could not hear that awful roar and rush? The trail took a sudden turn, and every animal stopped dead short. They knew where they were. Had they gone another foot they would have stepped right into the Colorado River.

"Whoo-ee! ain't she a fierce one!" cried Billy, dismounting, and running full tilt, followed by Ted, to the water's-edge.

Rags tugged at Billy's waistband.

"Billy-Willyum! You and Teddy come away from that ditch! She sho is actin' up outrageous. Glad we don't have to cross her."

"But we do," cried Billy, triumphantly. "Father said so."

"Go 'long, Billy! How we gonna cross a ragin' ocean when there ain't no boat? Our wings ain't growed yet. Here 's one darky knows on which side *he* stays."

"We are going to cross it," persisted Billy, "and you 're going to cross it with us, and we have n't a boat and we have n't any wings, and I 'll give you my new bow and arrow if you guess how we are going to do it. Father told me all about it on the way down."

"I ain't goin' to take no bowsenarrers away from you. I reckon I could guess, but I ain't a-tryin'. It jes can't be did."

But it could.

All eyes now turned to Pete, who was doing things unusual and extraordinary.

First, he got his pack-train into line, then he

went a few steps up the river's narrow bank. From behind a rock he shoved out a great cage, square, made of strong wire, and open at the top, with a gate in the side, and strung on a cable made fast to the rocks on both sides of the river. Opening the gate of the cage, he put one end of a plank on the sill, and rested the other on the ground below.

He gave one word of command. It sounded to the boys like "Ha-ump!" and it echoed from one end of the cañon to the other.

Two old mules separated themselves from the pack and, one behind the other, marched into the cage as quietly as if walking a plank over a raging torrent was as easy as walking to oats.

Pete followed, and, closing the cage, let loose a spring. With a whir and a *zip-bang,* before the waves had a chance to lick it, the cage whizzed across the river. Pete let down his passengers and came back for more, loading up on one side unloading on the other until only Blackie and Susannah were left.

"You go next with the kids, Colonel," said he. "Sometimes this pair needs coaxing."

As the colonel had often crossed before, he knew how to work the ferry, but the boys had the thrill of their lives. It was sport. To hop into a wire basket and whiz on a trolley through the air at a pace that made foaming water and brown rocks look like chocolate drops dotted with whipped cream caused little prickles up and down the spine, and was as much like flying as flight itself. The colonel went very fast. He wished to give the boys all the fun possible. Billy and Ted would have liked more of it, but Rags came down the plank breathing hard.

"Gee! I 'm glad we 's lit! Maybe all that breath I lost on the way 's waiting for me."

After unloading, the colonel sent the cage back to Pete. That person knew what he was about when he left Blackie and Susannah for the last trip. There was the cage-ferry all right, and there was Pete, with his foot on the gang-plank to keep it steady.

"Come along, now!" said Pete.

Neither animal moved a hoof.

"No fooling! Step lively!"

Not a budge.

Pete coaxed and persuaded gently, beguilingly.

Nothing happened.

Then Pete roared. Like a lion, it sounded to the boys on the other side.

At this Susannah's feelings were hurt, and, lifting up her voice, she honked mournfully. Blackie followed suit. Together they filled the gorge so full of brays and echoes that it rivaled the noise of the river itself. But nothing else happened.

Pete was patient. He joked and cajoled awhile longer; but night was coming on, and, as the burros declined to change their minds, he did it for them.

Watching his chance, he slipped behind Susannah, put both hands firmly on her back, and with a mighty push landed the surprised animal in the middle of the cage.

Blackie's head drooped and his tail hung limp.

"Come on, Blackie!" said Pete. "It 's your turn, and don't you get gay."

But Blackie's feet had grown to the earth, and it looked as if he purposed being a part of the scenery for the rest of time.

Pete tried pushing, petting, scolding. The donkey never even so much as flapped an ear. He looked at Pete as if saying:

"Move me if you can."

Being a mind-reader, without another word Pete unwound his lariat. He circled it overhead, gave it a twist or two, and tied it as a bow-knot around Blackie's feet. Then in a businesslike way he picked up the burro, walked the plank into the cage, slamming the gate, and started the cage on its way.

Blackie was mad. He was insulted. He would *not* ride in that cage! Pete's back was turned. The burro reared on his hind legs, and the horrified boys on the other side saw him

leap over the top of the cage into the raging waters below.

A chorus of wails rent the air.

"Poor little Blackie! He 'll be drowned! He 'll be drowned! Oh, somebody do something!"

"You jes leave him alone," cried Rags. "Give him room and hol' your bref and watch. That 's my donkey."

For some moments it looked as if waves and rocks were making mincemeat of Rags's small donkey. Sometimes he could be seen; oftener he could not. The waves slapped at him, the rocks jabbed him. Blackie fought and kicked, but, above all, swam.

He reached the shore and found a footing, climbed up the low bank, and, giving himself a good shake, went to nibbling a bunch of grass. He seemed to toss his stubby mane at the boys as if saying:

"I 'm some burro, don't you think?"

The boys gasped. They could hardly believe anything could have come out of that cur-

rent alive. But there was Blackie to prove it, and on looking him over for cuts and scratches, they found him sound and unhurt.

"What did I tell you?" shouted Rags. "Dat mule is a circus pony, and he 's marked for luck."

CHAPTER V

BY this time Pete had landed the cage and turned Susannah loose.

"Here we stop," said he.

A better place for a camp could not have been found. Thousands of years before, when the water was playing all manner of tricks and showing the towering rocks what it could do when it chose, it had nipped out a huge piece of cliff and sent it nobody knows where. The place left was as straight and even as if a giant's knife had cut a triangular slice out of a huge birthday cake. Apparently satisfied with its work, the water had backed away, leaving a smooth, sandy beach. Pete had camped here many times before, as had the colonel. It seemed purposely made for travelers' tents and ponies' corrals. Now, like the captain he was, Pete gave his orders, and, like good soldiers, the colonel, Billy, Teddy, and Rags obeyed.

Without orders, the mules stepped up one by one to be unloaded, and then trotted as gaily away as if each had not done a day of heavy work.

With every fellow doing his share, the well-fitted poles and pegs and canvas soon made connection, and in no time a tiny village rested at the foot of the great cliffs. From the top of each tent a saucy little flag waved to the rocks, as much as to say:

"Here we are, right and ready, and you must give us the best time you can."

There were sleeping-tents, one for the colonel, one for Billy and Ted, another for Rags, and still another to be used for work or play, and for meals, if necessary. For sometimes two clouds met in the cañon, one headed east, the other west. A terrific battle followed, with lightning for bayonets and thunder for guns. It was grand, to be sure, but making a good, snug, dry tent desirable.

To Pete any one who preferred a tent or a bed under anything but the sky was a softy or

a tenderfoot. Billy saw him shove an oilskin and a blanket under an overhanging rock, and asked:

"Where are you going to sleep, Mr. Pete?"

"Say, son, cut out the 'mister.' Misters and insects are about the same size down here. Plain Bills and Teds and Petes goes best. Yonder 's my downy couch." He pointed to a scooped-out place under the rocks.

"On the ground, without a roof!" exclaimed Ted.

"Yep, just that. Tried sleeping in a bed about twenty year' ago; come nigh choking to death. Just got to have stars to sleep by. They 're the only candles I want. But, say, something tells me it 's supper-time. Chase yourselves for driftwood and make a fire. I 'll dig out the fodder."

By the time the boys returned with arms full of wood, open bags and wide-mouthed cans stood in a row, on a shelf, ready for use. The hungry campers thought they could n't be used too soon. The table was a wide board, with

A better place for a camp could not have been found

each end resting in a rocky niche; the tin cups and plates had their proper places. The boys knew how to set the table, but in watching the guide cook they simply forgot knives and forks, and looked on. Wildcat Pete was the first person they had ever seen do real cooking without a stove, and the only person who could perform wonderful feats with pots, pans, and kettles over a roaring fire. The knives and forks had been dashed down anywhere, but it did n't take long to sort them, and by the time Pete had dished the smoking food they were right there ready for active hostilities.

When supper was over, cots, beds, and blankets were unrolled, and Billy discovered that it was as Hoo Lung had said—he found a "nize plesent." Neatly folded in his rubber blanket was a long sash-belt, with a strong steel hook on one end and a ring on the other. It was made of fine, close-meshed silk, thick, strong, and wide, and even in the half-light its color was the loveliest thing Billy had ever seen. It was deepest blue and the rosiest pink, chang-

ing from one shade to the other at every angle, like the cliffs of the cañon themselves. At the sight of it Billy gave a whoop of delight.

"I knew Hoo Lung liked you best," said Ted, in generous admiration, as he helped twist the belt round Billy's slender body. It wound round several times and, with his case-knife stuck into it, gave a gratifying Gipsy-on-the-stage look to young William.

A piece of paper fell from its last fold, and on it was written, "Wear it always for great luck."

The colonel was pleased, but Pete frowned and said:

"Wonder why that Chinaman spotted you out." Pete scratched his head. "Come to think of it, I heard him talking to somebody early this morning; said something about a present. Let me see that paper. Huh! this ain't no Chinaman's writing. Billy, if I were you, I would n't wear that belt."

"Pshaw!" said the colonel. "Who 's going to see it? Hoo Lung got somebody else to

write the paper. He keeps those things on hand for the tourists. Hoo Lung is as mild as a kitten and as honest as the day."

And so the matter was dropped for the present.

By the time things were in as precise order as in a military camp the darkness had grown so thick that the camp-fire seemed a splash of gold in a sea of ink. Tired as they were, the campers gathered about it to watch the shadow-pictures that the flames made on the giant rocks. Then Pete began to tell stories of the cañon—about the first white men who had explored its beauties and braved its dangers, of their fights with the Indians. He told of men lost in their search for gold, and he was a good story-teller, for he had spent his life doing and seeing big things, and knew how to send thrills along the spine, make eyes sparkle with fun or flesh creep in terror. The cañon was his home, and he loved it in all its moods, loved all that was in or above it. Looking up, he said:

"Kids, do you know how them trill-million sparklers got a chance to shine?"

"Sure," answered Billy. "They are left-overs from the planets and things."

"Like dough after mammy's cut out her biscuits," said Rags.

"Is that so?" drawled Pete. "Indians tell a different story. Sounds kinder prettier than biscuit dough, somehow."

"Tell it!" cried the three boys.

"Might scalp Indian, take away a part of his skin, but it ain't possible to loose him from his believin's," said Pete. "Pueblos says they know for sure how the stars were made; nothing hard in that. The blazing sun is the god they fall down and worship. No evil spirit can touch *that* god, though one came mighty near it once."

Here Pete stopped as if he never meant to speak another word.

"Go on, Pete!" "Don't stop!" "Please tell us!" were some of the entreaties. "If you don't, we 'll be looking up at 'em all night."

"Well," Pete's deep voice drawled, "it was about this way. One day when the sun was off his job, some jealous piker of an evil spirit thought he or she would take a shy at things. Just to keep from mistakes, as we don't know whether male or female, we 'll call this evil spirit 'High Jinks.' Well, High Jinks got the blackest, thickest curtain that ever was and pulled it over the sky. Not a hint of their sun-god could the Indians see. Take it from me, kids, them Pueblos were some nervous. They made a get-away to poke up the sun's night watchman. This watchman was n't a god so as you 'd know it, but he was a crack shot. When he scented the news, he just ups with bow and arrows and shoots that curtain so plumb full of holes that the sun-god 's been peeking through ever since, and every night he pleases."

As the interest of the young listeners was flattering to the guide, he had recourse to the ruse of some more ancient tellers of tales, and added:

"But Indian yarns ain't a pinch to what really happens to white people in this here cañon. I could tell a story of a man I knew who got lost, and for days and days was trailed by a hungry wolf with snapping jaws, and—"

Rags shut off the story-telling. He did n't like to hear at night about wolves following men. Up he jumped, pointing in excitement to the new moon, swinging between the high walls.

"Looky at that moon! I 'scovered him over my right shoulder. That 's good luck, and not even a wolf 's going to ketch us. Injuns may know 'bout stars, but I knows how the dipper moon was made. So does Billy and Ted, for I tol' them 'most before they could talk. It 's a song."

"All right," said Pete; "let 's have it. Singing 's a heap better sound than the yapping of a hungry wolf."

Then in a fluty voice Rags piped up a song almost as old as the cañon:

"Little half-moon 's a silver boat.
Fust she sails, and then she floats;
She 's high on the ends and low in the middle,
And ef you knows why, you 've guessed the riddle.

Long time ago there was a coon
Runned away from the man what lives in the moon.
Got so hungry he had to fight,
So he nipped out the middle in one big bite."

There were more verses, and Rags was going on; but the colonel interfered.

"Bedtime, boys, and early hours to-morrow. I 've lots of business on hand. To begin with, we must find a name for our camp."

"Can't think about to-morrow," said a sleepy voice, Billy's. "To-day 's been the bulliest ever. I bet you this is the jolliest camp that ever was."

"Good for you, Bill," said the colonel. "We choose a name right now. Camp Jolly it is. Roll in, and not a word from any of you till morning."

A needless command, for eyes could hardly stay open long enough to see how to roll in.

Soon the only thing the silver boat of a moon could find awake in the cañon was a great gray owl in a scrub-pine watching Pete nod while waiting for the fire to burn to ashes. That is to say, the owl was the only thing the moon saw near Camp Jolly. In another part of the cañon it peeped at somebody wide-awake and very busy.

CHAPTER VI

IN the morning Wildcat Pete had to leave the party in order to go up-stream for a boat. He told the boys he expected to be back by night, and if they would go to a certain near-by point which gave a view up and down the river and watch for him, they would see something.

After the guide's departure the colonel set the boys to work putting the camp in order and helping him prepare his instruments for the serious work that had brought him to the cañon.

Everybody was busy, but it is a poor workman who does n't look up and down once in a while, especially when Beauty is the ringmaster and keeps parading all sorts of wonderful sights. Across the river a high cliff stuck its haughty head straight in the air. In its

steep sides were many openings, large and small, square and round. Billy noticed them first. They might be bear-holes, they might be robbers' caves, but he could n't see how either bears or robbers could skin up a slick marble slab like that. His father, who knew all that any man could know, must tell him.

"Those?" replied the colonel. "Once upon a time they were homes. The side of that mountain was a city, and a big one. We call its inhabitants the cliff-dwellers, because they made their homes by cutting back into the cliffs. What you see are the doorways of the ruined homes of great tribes. They lived this way for protection from wild animals and human enemies."

Rags had listened with rolling eyes.

"Say, Marse Tom, you ain't trying to make us boys believe that sho-'nough human peoples lived up there?"

"Crowds of them. Men, women, girls, and boys like you."

"Like me! Naw, sir! 'Scuse me, Marse Tom; but you is mistooken. A body like me has better sense. Dat mounting is the straightes', frontes' hill I ever see. Ain't nothin' but monkeys could clam it."

"Wrong you are, Rags. Thousands of real people have gone over every inch of those rocks. They ate, slept, played, and worked much as people do to-day."

"Jiminy!" exclaimed Ted. "If they got there once, they 'd have to stay."

"Wrong again. Those people chose their homes much as the woodpecker chooses his nest in the top of the tallest pine-tree. The men were great fishers and hunters, and as sure-footed as mountain goats. It was as easy for them to get about as walking is for you. They could swing down from their doors on a heavy rope of plaited grass to a ledge, and nimbly leap from that to another until they reached any desired spot."

"Could the children and their mothers do that, too?" asked Billy.

"I have n't a doubt of it. But they had another way. If ladies wished to pay calls or children had a birthday party, they used their tree-ladders. Every house had one, stout and strong, and just long enough to touch another door-sill. In times of peace these ladders swarmed with people. Then maybe somebody saw a curious flash from a far-away hill. In a minute there would n't be a ladder or a human being in sight. The light meant danger —a war-signal. Big flat stones were rolled against doorways. As long as the people stayed behind them they were as safe from the enemy as the eagle's aery is from the cinnamon bear."

"Ugh! Ump! Marse Tom, how come it you found out all this learnin' about people what 's dead and gone and ain't lef' nobody to tell you?"

"I 've studied and dug for it, Rags. It is my business out here now. Some day Pete and I are going to climb up to those houses and see what else we can discover."

Cheers and whoops greeted this announcement.

"Hooray! We can go, too. Promise us!"

"If you make such a racket I shall have to go to one of them alone to get some peace. I 'll have to think about it. Wait, and we 'll see what Pete says."

"What for, Uncle?" asked Teddy. "There are the cliffs, and here are the boys."

"I behold the cliffs, and I also hear three noisy, pestering voices; but not yet do I see myself helping three young rascals to scale those walls. Off with you now, and when you are hungry, come back and get dinner."

That time came early, for playing around the cañon whets the appetite. The boys tried to cook like Pete. The dinner was either burned or raw, but there was fun in cooking it. When things had been tidied according to rule, the colonel told them that they could explore a side cañon, near the camp, for a short distance.

"Rags, you are the oldest; don't let Billy

lead you and Teddy into any mischief. He 's been so tame and obedient since we left home I 'm getting frightened."

"Yes, sir. I 'll look after him good."

"Billy, take that knife out of your belt. You may wear the belt, but you must not go climbing over these rocks with anything like that. You might stumble and fall on it."

" 'S'pose something comes after us?"

"There 's nothing to come after you. When I think it 's about time for Pete I 'll give two short bugle-blasts, and you can go to that point where you can see him."

Billy removed the knife slowly, put it carefully away, and the three started out at once. They explored the side cañon, and in it found so many new sights that they could hardly take them all in. How the chipmunks, the lizards, the wild birds made their homes were stories in themselves. The boys discovered that animals had war-signals as well as the cliff-dwellers, and used them to good advantage if disturbed by strange two-legged things. Even

the trees in this gorge were funny and unusual. They grew right out of huge rocks, and were so twisted they took all sorts of curious shapes, looking like a procession of little old men and women holding out their arms to the bottom of the cañon, where there should have been a friendly little brook. But the brook had long ago given up its bed to flowers such as grow only in the wild and lonesome places of the earth.

"It 's like a museum here," said Teddy.

"Museum, nothing!" retorted Billy. "Where 's your sign, 'Do not lean on the glass'? You can go as close as you choose to all these things. Those little glass cases in Elkhurst Library like this!"

For all about lay shiny quartz and bushels of Indian arrow-heads and other things, rainbow-colored and beautiful.

The sun fired up, the breeze went to sleep, but the boys went on harvesting a crop of curios that bulged their pockets and filled their arms.

"Say, fellows," said Billy, straightening up, "my back 's broken. Let 's quit for to-day."

"Let 's," said Rags, promptly. "I know now how them children felt fetching manna from the wilderness. It 's nigh kin to plantin' taters."

"Aw, Rags, don't say 'taters'! Say *per*-taters."

"Well, never min', Teddy honey; dey tastes jes the same. That minds me of the sandwiches we brung along. Ain't it 'bout time to put 'em in the safest place?"

There was no division on this question, and as they ate they discussed the signs around them. So many arrow-heads meant Indians. Maybe there had been a fight on this very spot.

Suddenly out of nowhere came a sound. It had nothing to do with birds and trees and lizards and chipmunks, but it might be connected with wild animals and Indians.

"What 's that?" gasped Teddy.

"What 's what?" demanded Rags, his eyes beginning to roll.

"Did n't you hear something like a moan or a growl or something?" asked Teddy.

Rags edged closer to the two boys. "Go 'long, Teddy! You always is hearin' somethin' nobody else is."

"Keep quiet, Rags!" said Billy. "There *is* something." If he only had had his knife!

Again there came a strange noise, but whether growl or howl or moan none could say. Wildcat Pete himself would have been puzzled to say where it came from. At first it was n't so very loud, but, once started, the cliffs took it up, threw it across the chasm to another cliff, which in turn tossed it to the hollow, which rolled it round and round, making it bigger and bigger; so that by the time it got back to the boys it sounded like a pack of wolves coming ever nearer and nearer.

Rags had all he could do to keep from running,—he had promised Marse Tom,—but he clutched Ted's hand. Even Billy grew a bit white, and how he wished for his good knife! He could see himself slashing at whatever this

was, holding awful monsters at bay while the others called or ran for help.

"Le' 's race," said Rags, in a quavering tone. "I bet I can beat you up the hill."

Without waiting for the prescribed "one, two, three," the boys went over bowlders big and little, jumping bushes, minding neither thorns nor bruises, so long as that noise was left behind.

At the moment that they reached the trail the notes of the bugle sounded, and they scampered up the hillside, at the top dropping to the ground to breathe and rest.

There is not a spot on earth where the sun is kept so busy as in the Grand Cañon of Arizona. The gorges are so deep it takes time for his most powerful rays to reach the bottom. There are so many, that almost before he can finish his brightening-up rounds it 's time to cross over to China and Japan. Before he went this evening he seemed to be frisky and playful, making shadows that looked like huge giants, and changing bushes into freak trees

and animals. Coming after the terrible sound, the boys found them more than wonderful. Then the sun took a sidewise slant to the west, turning mountains, cliffs, and rivers to a deep pink. Teddy, who had an eye for the beautiful, was first to notice.

"Look!" he cried. "It 's a sure-enough pink dream."

"Dream, nothin'," said Rags. "I feel 'zackly like I was inside a ripe strawberry."

Then Billy, giving a wild shout, sent all the poetry flying.

"He 's coming! Yonder 's Pete! Whoo-ee! Look at the waves hitting him! Oh, don't you wish you were with him?"

Instantly the boys were on their feet, straining eyes and bodies so as not to miss one move of the little canoe battling with the swift rapids. Wildcat Pete knew the river's game; many a time had he run the rapids never sure, when he went in, that he would ever come out or that, if he did, all of him would come with him. Under the waves were hundreds of

jagged rocks that never showed a point until something came along to be punched. Jabbing seemed to be their sole reason for existence. As for waves! Well, they were rougher than a dozen foot-ball teams. They jumped up, hit Pete in the face, tore off his hat, soaked him to the skin. While twisting one end of the canoe, they shoved the other end in the opposite direction. Failing to wrest the oars from his hands, they tumbled with a rush into the boat, almost filling it. It was a tug of war between a big force and a big man, with danger at every turn.

The three boys stood as close as they dared to the edge of a cliff that overhung the rapids. Then, as the contest waxed warmer, they dropped to hands and knees, crept forward until their bodies lay flat on the rocks, and, with necks out-stretched, watched every strategy Pete used in his battle with the river.

The excitement made the cousins almost speechless, but it served to set Rags's tongue all a-clatter with lingo learned at the stables.

"Hol' him, Marse Wildcat! Hol' him tight! Set high in the saddle, squeeze in yo' knees! Pull on the reins, man! Don' you hear what I say? Push! Jab that rock in the ribs, and ride for your life! That 's right! You 's got him! Hoop-la! We 'se done it, and dat las' stretch 's smooth as a greased griddle."

The boys saw Pete glide into a shadowy pool, and gave way to their delight by cheers. Jumping up, they joined hands, singing at the top of their lungs:

> "Went to the fair on my old Nance.
> Folks done say she got no chance;
> But that prize mule just riz right up
> And loped clean off with the silvery cup."

Then they started back to the camp.

"Rags," said Billy, "you are the funniest boy I ever saw. What made you use all that horse talk about the boat? Horses have n't anything to do with boats."

"Ain't they? Well, ef that *ca*noe was n't

actin' up jes like a misbehavin' filly I 'll give you my best agate."

Teddy said:

"Anyhow, if mammy won't let you be a jockey, you ought to be a clown in the circus. Why don't you?"

Praise was sweeter to the black boy than buckwheat cakes slicked over with molasses.

"I 'spec' you is right, Teddy. That clown business would suit me better 'n 'mos' anything 'cep' a rider; but mammy say I got to be a 'zorter."

"A 'zorter? What 's that?" asked Billy.

"Lawsy me, chile, don't you know what a 'zorter is? It 's a kind o' preacher. But, look here, we 've got to hustle, or somebody 'll be 'zortin' us 'nother way."

At the camp Colonel Hargrave was helping Pete pull in the boat. He suggested that the boys lend a hand, and give Pete a chance to dry out. They rushed to the work with zest. The guide sat down near by, looking like a bear, with his bedraggled sheepskin coat and

shaggy head. The grin would n't leave his face as he watched the "inlanders" awkwardly pull at the boat.

"You kids remind me of young puppies tugging at an elephant. Inlanders is funny. Guess I 'm funny, too. They got no claim on deserts and cañons; citified things ain't a-callin' me."

Later, when supper was over, and everything was ready for the night, the party gathered around the fire. Pete had provided a pile of fuel, and the flames ate it up, jumping as high as possible, sticking out their tongues, and making all kinds of queer shadow-pictures on the rock walls.

The colonel listened to the story of the race with the rapids, but not one word was said by the boys about the sound that had frightened them. Presently two young heads dropped forward, and one woolly one went thump on the ground.

"I reckon we 'll have to put these young rovers to bed," said the colonel.

CHAPTER VII

AS the colonel's sojourn in the cañon was limited to a few weeks, he was working day and night in order to accomplish something really worth while. He went about smiling at the thought of the splendid new secrets he had discovered, which were all but ready to be put into a new book. He was well contented with the results of the trip not only on his work, but on the three boys, who were growing hardier and manlier every day. As he peeled potatoes and opened cans he whistled a gay tune.

None of the boys had mentioned the scare of the day before, and Billy, for one, was ashamed of the part he had played. It was all right for Ted, who was younger, and for Rags, who never took chances unless he was forced. But Billy had prided himself on his

courage. He had been taught with his a-b-c's that the son of Mary Scott and Thomas Hargrave, having come from generations of soldiers, must uphold the family record for bravery. Here at the first real test he had made flying-machines of his legs. What if his mother knew? Many a time had she said:

"Keep a clean heart and a cool head, Billy, and when danger comes you will prove true."

His heart might be clean, but it had beat so fast that he thought it was going to jump out of his mouth. As for his head, there had not been a cool spot inside or out. Billy was growing quite down-hearted when a new excitement made him forget for a minute. A guide arrived by the ferry with letters and a message for his father. One of the letters was from Billy's mother. He heard the man tell the colonel that there was a long-distance call for him from his wife at the hotel, saying that, if possible, she must speak with him.

Billy saw his father read the letters with a frown, the one with his mother's handwriting

first, and then take Pete aside and hold a conference in the tent. Later he called Billy, with a manner so grave that Billy knew something serious had occurred.

"Come here, Son; I wish to speak to you."

"He knows about yesterday and some other things," thought William.

Pete was sitting in the tent looking glum and frowny.

"Billy," said the colonel, "you remember, before we left home, I promised that when the time came I would trust you with a family worry which might prove serious. Say nothing to Rags or Ted about what I now tell you. I must leave you and the boys here with Pete for a week maybe. I shall tell you why."

Billy felt a lump in his throat. He swallowed hard and then said:

"Hold on a minute, Father, I 've got something to tell you first; then maybe you won't tell me."

"Out with it."

"We went to a side cañon yesterday—you know it, Pete?"

"Yep; I 'm partner with every stick and stone in there."

"Do any wild animals—bears or tigers—live in it?"

"Well now, Billy boy, as to wild animals, you might find a fighting woodpecker, a fierce chipmunk or a battling lizard up there; but tigers don't grow in these parts, and bears is taking a holiday on the other side, where the forests be."

"But yesterday," said Billy, "we heard the awfullest sound up there. And it sounded so awful I just up and scooted fast as I could. Ted and Rags ran, too. We could n't tell whether it was a howl or a groan, but I ran away from it."

"A sheep, maybe, fallen down the ravine," solemnly suggested Pete.

A sheep! Had he run away from a sheep? Billy's head sank, and his face became redder and redder as his father said:

"Do you mean to tell me that you ran away from a noise? Why, Billy!"

Pete felt sorry for both of them.

"I tell you what," he said, "if that scarey thing was there yesterday, it may be there to-day. Take the others; go back and find out all about it."

"How about it, Billy?" questioned Colonel Hargrave.

"We 'll do it, and we won't come back till we know what it was," said Billy, with sudden courage.

"That 's right. Now for the present affair. I have a letter from your mother which worries me no little. You may not know it, Billy, but before Ted was born his father went away. Nobody knows where. Ted was just one day old when his mother died, and her sister, your mother, brought the little chap to our home. Colville has never seen his boy, never provided for him, or cared what became of him. As he was a dissipated rover, we hoped never to hear from him again. No such luck. Lately he

has been very troublesome; thinks we have money, and threatens to claim Teddy unless we pay a round sum. When Washington ordered me out here, I thought it safer to have you boys with me. Now your mother sends me a special letter, saying that two days after we left, Colville appeared, demanding Ted. The man was in an ugly, fighting mood and made many serious threats. Since then something else must have happened, for she wishes to talk to me over long-distance, and I 'm off to the hotel. Now, Son, you know the facts. Pete and I have arranged certain matters. You will take orders from him, and both of you will look after Ted until I return."

Billy promised, happy for the chance to make good.

Pete said:

"All three of you can go back to the lair of that awful sound, and if you find any kind of varmint, dead or alive, I 'll let you shoot the rapids with me to celebrate."

"O, Father, can we?"

"If you stick to your part of the bargain, you may go anywhere Pete is willing to take you."

After hasty preparation, the colonel was ready to go. His last order was to Rags:

"Help Pete take care of them. I leave the boys in your care."

"Sho 's you born, Marse Tom, nothin' goin' to hurt 'em while this here darky 's got eyes in his head and kicks to his feet."

The campers watched the father and the new guide out of sight, and then Billy told the other two of the plan and Pete's offer, that prospect for the moment lulling fears of the awful noise. Ted said:

"I 'll go with you if Rags will."

Rags wavered.

"I ain't a-yearnin' to know nothing more 'bout that noise," he announced.

"All right," said Billy; "then I go by myself."

"No, you don't, either," said Ted. "Rags, you promised Uncle Tom you 'd look after us,

and the first thing we want to do, you back out. You 'll feel nice when Pete takes us shooting the rapids and you are left at Camp Jolly alone."

Better be eaten alive than miss a race of any kind, so poor Rags consented to go. But he was not in anything you could call a hurry. He found many tasks, muttering:

"I don' know how you white folkses 'spec' me to *per*form all the camp work and go projeckin' for varmints at one and the same time."

As Rags had never been celebrated for loving work, this made the others laugh. He gave a half-laugh himself as he grumbled:

"Well, come along. Jes' looks like nobody can't even go huntin' wild beastes 'outen Rags."

The boys set out. Pete, grinning a farewell in the background, could not refrain from a parting shot:

"You boys look mighty brave. Wonder how you feels."

The hunters of strange noises walked fast, and halted at the mouth of the little cañon.

"Come on, fellows; we can't hear it from this place. Have to go farther in." Again Billy took the lead.

Great chasms have a language all their own, and perhaps it is because they like to hear themselves talk that they make the most of every sound. For a while, as Billy led the other two up the ravine, there was silence; but as they penetrated deeper, the cliff and hollows again echoed with the cries of the day before.

"That 's it; but where 's it coming from?" asked Billy.

The three stood listening.

"Say, Billy," said Ted, "see that big rock across from here? It sounds like it came from there."

"It does," agreed Billy. But nobody made any further move. Then he said, and it sounded very quiet for noisy Billy, "The only way to find out is to go and see for ourselves."

Said Rags, in mournful resignation:

"Ef we got to go, le' 's go quick." He filled his pockets with stones. Billy had already started, but exactly as if he had n't, Rags added, "You go first, Billy, and Ted 'n' me 'll bring up the rear with my slung-shot."

Slowly picking the way, his fear gone, Billy led the boys, and began to climb toward the hidden terror. The hill had not been made for quick travel, and its sides were particularly rough and stony. Only by grasping at small, tough bushes and pulling one another could the boys make any headway. Sometimes before they were up, all three took a swift slide backward; but each struggle brought them nearer, as the volume of sound showed. Finally, with one big pull, they reached a small level. Then they had the biggest surprise any boys ever had.

Under the shelter in a hollow lay not a bear or a tiger or even a sheep, but the most beautiful red-brown collie that they had ever seen. He seemed very feeble, but the minute the boys appeared he tried to wag his tail.

"A dog!" exclaimed the three with one voice, Rags, it may be, the most jubilant.

"But he 's hurt. How can we ever get him out?"

Here Rags suddenly became as courageous as an Indian scout.

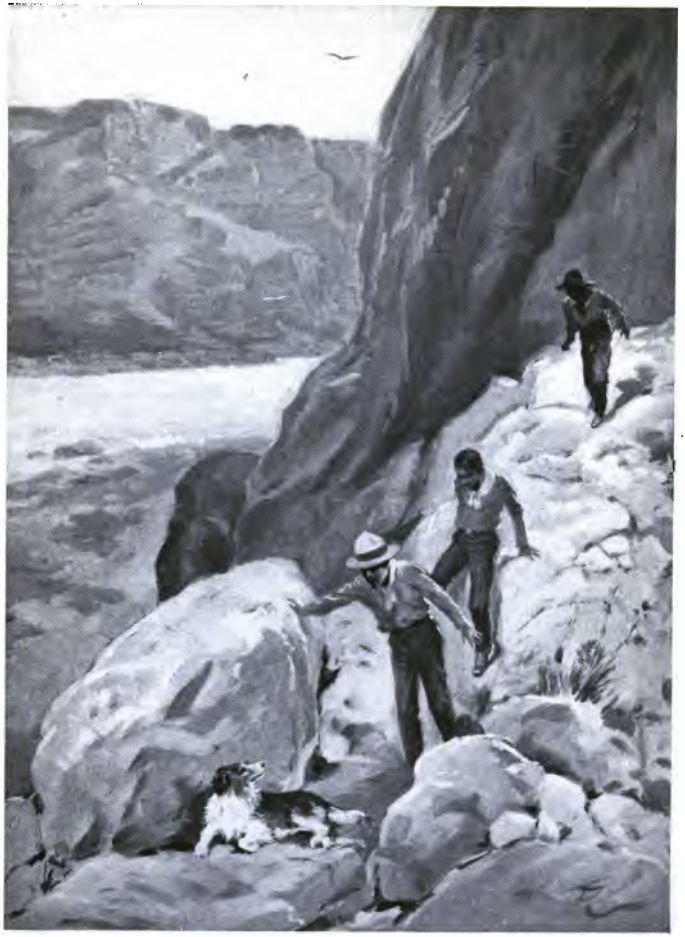
"Now, don' worry 'bout that. So long as it ain't no hant or catamountings, *I* kin manage. Jes wait till I slide down like a parachute, and I 'll lif' that pup up."

"But, Rags, I saw him first," said Billy.

"And I 'm going any place Billy does," said Teddy.

"Of c'ose, of co'se. The way you chilluns does ack, an' me hardly got my mouf shet from tellin' your pa I 'll take keer of you! Come on, then, if you jes will poke round danger."

The collie lay still, unable to move. Making a cloud of dust, the boys slid down the steep incline to where he waited, trying to wag a welcome with his great bushy tail. It was n't a very big wag, but the boys recognized the



The collie lay still, unable to move

intention. They saw that the dog had not only fallen from the top of the cliff, but had been without food and water for some time. The thing to do was to get him to Camp Jolly as soon as possible; but how this was to be done caused anxious thought. They had to have something to carry him on.

"Wish wool blankets flourished roun' here same as sticks and thorny trees does," said Rags. "I ain't got the heart to lay that poor pup on stickery logs."

Teddy sat on the ground smoothing the shaggy mane of the wounded animal. Billy stood by, thinking hard. Presently he clapped his hands.

"I 've got it! Get two straight branches, and we 'll take off our undershirts and make a stretcher. I 've got some string."

"Billy, you suttingly is the boss thinker," said Rags as he ran for the poles.

At the end of half an hour six busy hands had made out of three shirts, two young trees, and a lot of string a rough, but strong and

steady, litter. Upon it they carefully lifted the wounded dog.

Then Billy knocked himself on the head.

"Are n't we the simples! How are we going to get him up? Nobody, not even Pete himself, could climb back that steep place with a dog as big as a bear."

Everybody, of course, had something to say, but nothing to propose. Things looked black indeed when from away off somewhere came a voice:

"Go straight ahead, make a left turn, and keep to the sun." There was Wildcat Pete leaning far over the cliff.

The boys were as glad to see Pete as the dog had been to see them. They went to work to carry out his orders. Billy and Ted each took a handle of the stretcher. In the rear, at his own choice, Rags struggled alone.

It was n't easy work, but Pete, from his roost on high, was as cheerful as a foot-ball rooter, and, making a megaphone of his hands, sang out:

"Easy, kids! Keep time! Right foot, left foot. You must keep your step good."

The boys took up the refrain and, choosing their way carefully, went in the direction of the camp.

The tricky way the cañon has of concealing its entrances and trails looks exactly as if, once on a time, its rocks had played pussy-wants-a-corner, and never were able to straighten out again.

Every few steps the narrow path seemed to end in a rock, run up a tree, or wiggle down a black and spooky gorge. Sometimes it looked as if it were going to get the prize for the best-behaved path, and again it would have taken a spy-glass or an Indian's eye to find it.

But by pegging away and following Pete's orders the procession came at last to the river-bank only a short distance from the camp.

Pete was waiting when the boys put down their burden, and his hand was quickly at work tying, sponging, and arranging splints. Then,

while feeding the grateful animal with warm milk, he said:

"Well, kids, you win; I pays with the ride. This ain't no varmint, and I 'll lick anybody that says this dog 's anything but a first-classer."

There was much discussion as to where the dog came from and if they could keep him. Did they have to hunt the owner at once?

But Pete said he thought the collie had fallen at night, and had belonged to a tribe of Indians who were probably far away by this time. "Anyhow, this dog can't go away from here until he 's well and hearty and fat and frisky."

Food and friends are the best dog-doctors, and the collie had found both, and was soon asleep on his bed of clean straw and as happy as a dog in the circumstances could be.

The next thing was to name him.

Everybody knows that it is hard to find the best name for a good dog at any time, but when lots of other things wonderful and new, and

miles of tramping, not to mention certain stirrings up of the feelings, have filled a day, it is almost as hard as piecing a puzzle when one is sleepy. Had it not been for Rags, the tired rescuers might have called the dog Rover or Hank or Jim or Sam. Awake or asleep, Rags always had something to say, and he was not silent now:

"Ain't but one name for that dog. He ought to be named Reddy."

"Why Reddy?" asked Billy.

" 'Cause was n't we ready and waitin' to go for him? Was n't he all ready and waitin' for us? An' more 'n ready to come? And ain't he got the reddest hair of any dog round here?"

"What do you think, Pete?" asked Teddy.

"I think it 's a good name and a good reason for it."

"Wonder what his Indian name was; could you guess what tribe he belonged to, Pete?" asked Billy.

Pete piled more drift on the fire as the party gathered round the blaze. He lighted his pipe

and made himself comfortable before answering; then he said:

"Can't say, Sonny. There 's many different kinds of Indians wandering round these gorges. You see, after the white man come along and swiped all the lands, seems as if the Indians ain't ever cared to settle down to one place. Soon 's they do, a prospector or a quick permoter happens by, cheats them with big promises and little cash, and off they has to go. You 'll meet up with Blue Waters, Hopis, and Navajos, with so many kin-folks in the Mohawks, the Yumas, and the Wallapais that it 's like tryin' to count ants."

A blazing log fell from the fire. Out and up flew the sparks, making a little Fourth of July celebration all their own. They lighted up the great rock across the river and made the doorways of the ancient cliff-dwellers look like big black polka-dots on a pink curtain.

Ted noticed it first, and exclaimed:

"Look at that! Is n't it beautiful? Peo-

ple could n't really climb up there, could they, Pete?"

"Yes, it can be done."

"Could we climb it?" asked Billy, little dreaming in what circumstances he was to recall the question.

"You boys? I don't think so; but the colonel and I are going up there some day pretty soon."

"Then why can't we go?" persisted Billy.

"Because climbing rope-ladders is rather risky sport for town boys."

"Billy can shin up any telegraph pole that ever was," said Teddy, the incense-burner.

"Yes, sirree, Marse Wildcat Pete, he kin, and the stunts us boys can do in a hay-lof' 'd make a circus-man tired."

"That may be so, but this is different," said Pete. "You must have pickaxes, crowbars, rope-ladders, and a great deal of judgment. That 's why the Gov'ment sent the colonel out here, and it 's why the colonel asks me to go

along. But it's long past bedtime, boys. Turn in."

Almost before a moonbeam could get a line on the tents, the three boys were sound asleep. Fire-crackers and cannon could n't have wakened them.

But the dream-maker was certainly up to something. He turned the whole cañon into a magic playground in which Billy Hargrave flew from cliff to cliff, skipped up and down rope-ladders, swung from high rocks, followed by Reddy and Teddy and Rags, with an ease that made walking to school seem a useless waste of time.

CHAPTER VIII

THOUGH Pete filled the days following the colonel's departure as full as possible, everybody missed him. Reddy was getting well in a miraculous fashion, and becoming more attached to his new masters every day.

One morning Billy and Ted hung the bedding out to sun, and began making plans for the day. It was Rags's part to right all odds and ends and clear the breakfast-table. Rags claimed a body could work faster to music, so he generally punctuated his tasks with song. To the accompaniment of rattling pans and clattering dishes this is what he now sang:

"Ole Marse Noah jumped in the ark,
With the pigs an' the cows and the singin' lark.
He called to the camel an' he called to the ca'f,
He called to the zebry an' the big giraffe.
They all come a-runnin' cep' long-necked gi,

'N' he stuck up his head mos' mighty high.
Den he laughed an' he laughed an' he laughed some mo',
An' said, 'Why, Noah, I kin wade to the sho'.' "

Hands and feet kept time to the tune and when his work was finished he indulged in a series of handsprings.

Pete attended to the mules and the burros. After he had given them a good breakfast and had seen them happy and contented he remarked quite casually, as it were:

"Say, kids, what about taking that boat-ride to-day? The cañon has already jacked up your muscles and put some stiffening in your backs. Get your fishing-tackle and a snack of bread and meat, and we 'll take a hike."

This announcement set the camp in commotion. Every boy gave a yell, causing the mules and burros to race around their inclosure like mad. There was arguing about what to take, where to find it, and in less than no time they were ready. Across the back of each

swung a lunch-bag, fishing-tackle, and a sweater. Reddy nearly hurt his throat barking, but they had to tie him up, as he had too recently met with his accident to stand so rough a trip.

"Is it safe to leave him?" asked Billy.

"Perfectly. He 's got plenty of grub and water, a nice bed, and the burros for company. We 'll be back long before sundown."

But when the start was made Reddy's brown eyes looked so sorrowful that the party had to rush away from the begging look in them.

They had gone only a short distance when a thought popped into Billy's head and out of his mouth.

"How are we going to get down the rapids, Pete? We have n't any boat."

"Good plan to wait and see, Son."

"Can we get one same place you did last week?" asked Ted.

Pete did n't answer, and Rags, scenting mystery, whispered to his companions:

"Leave him alone. Bet Marse Pete could coax a ark from the bulrushes."

"Aw, Rags, what you talking about? Ain't any bulrushes round here. Just scrub-oaks and little of them," said Ted.

"That don' make no difference to Marse Pete. I knows a cunjer-man when I sees him, and if he ain't one, there ain't any such thing."

The first mile seemed to be made just to try out the grit of would-be mountaineers. Had not Teddy and Billy and Rags put in the weeks roughing it they would have soon wilted. As it was, it took all the breath and muscle of the boys. The guide went up the stiff climb as easily as if they were walking on smooth ground. Sometimes the path seemed as straight as the side of a house. Only by linking hands and pulling all together could they get a foot farther. But every trail has an end. This one stopped at the edge of a grassy plateau as round and soft as a huge feather-bed. Not a minute passed by before packs went down and bodies stretched out. But weary

legs and throbbing muscles were soon forgotten in the magic world that spread before them. As far as the eye could reach were a thousand pictures, made up of pink and red castles, temples and towers, chiseled by wind and water. Far away forests were painted green, mountains touched with white, and every picture was tied to the other by the silvery rope of a shining river.

The boys had a fine game of guessing whether things they saw were really so or not. Pete was silent. He knew how the biggest words said the least when a fellow tried to tell about this grandeur. Sometimes he spent hours just looking into the wonderland which he called home. He was gazing into it now when Billy came rushing up breathless from a discovery he had made with the other two boys.

"Say, Pete, we found something! It looks like a round-house. And another something like a street gutter. What are they? Did people ever live up here?"

Rags had his say:

" 'Co'se not, Billy. Ain't no pussons loves lonesomeness 'nough ter settle in dis pasture."

Pete shoved his hat over to shade his eyes from the brilliant sun, looked up at Billy, and said:

"You guessed right, Billy. Once this very place was what you call a boom-town."

"Aw, Pete; what you giving me? People live up here? Where 've they gone?" The guide smiled slowly.

" 'T ain't for me to say, being as it happened 'bout same time Spanish Columby staked a claim on the U. S."

"Good gracious, Pete, was n't that millions of years ago? How does anybody know this was a town or anything?" protested Billy.

"By rocks, if they ain't nothing else to tell. Give 'em time, and rocks 'll talk same as books, only different. If you get on to their readings, they 'd tell you once the Amerinds, a kind of Injun, lived here and was some numerous and powerful. Built stone houses, ditches to irrigate, and growed crops in the river-bottoms.

Holidays they chased over to that far valley and scooped up bucketfuls of gold."

"*Bucketfuls* of gold!" exclaimed the astonished boys almost together.

"Could just as easy said car-loads," continued Pete. "They 's hills of it over there, and, what 's more, it 's going to stay there. Indians was the only ones ever knew how to make the hills let go of it. Being as how they got so rich, the news perambulated 'bout 'mong the neighbors. Then there was more trouble than gold. That round-house you see is all that was left of a tower where the arrow-men could get a line first on his neighbor. When they did see them a-coming, racing, there was sure to be something doing. My! what fights they was!" Pete, looking out over the plateau, with its few ruins of ancient houses, talked as if he had seen the whole thing.

"They was thousands of redmen on top of the cliff, waitin' behind rocks and scrub-trees; thousands more on bare-back ponies racing across the plains to the cliff. Indians can shin

up rocks same as cats up roofs. Ponies they ride is 'most as good climbers as squirrels. Come time for climbing, neighbors on top got busy. Air was thick with stone arrows and tomahawks. Poisoned ones, too. And I lay a gamble on it, one of these fights over, there was n't enough Indian feathers left to line a cuckoo's nest. 'What 's the use?' says I. Kept this up till the' was n't nobody left to shoot a' arrow, and the hills still has the prize. But I bet you could be pickin' up bones yet."

The boys had listened breathlessly to Pete's story of the long-ago fights, and when he said there might be something left to show for it, it was hard to sit still.

"Come on, fellows! Let 's go find some!" suggested Billy.

"Now, Billy," protested Rags, "you leave them dead Injun bones ter deyse'ves. You 'll get hanted fus thing you know. Anyhow, you got to behave jes like Marse Pete say."

Pete had not said they could n't go, but he knew that while on the plateau it was still

early, down in the cañon daylight waited for no man. So he said:

"Not to-day, kids. They 'll keep. This Arizony air dries meat and kind of pickles bones. Come again in a hundred years, you 'll find 'em. Sun says half a day 's 'most done. This way. All ready?"

The way down, though steep, was like taking a walk through a park. Moss covered the rocks, making big green pillows of them. Ferns and flowers grew everywhere. Gathering nuts from the piñon-tree was almost as much fun as hunting hickory-nuts at home. It was pretty hard to hurry through a place where there were splendid new things to do and see. And it seemed as if Pete kept up a kind of tune, which said: "That 'll do, boys; don't get behind. Come on, boys; don't get behind."

Finally the path became very narrow and as rough as a quarry. It was stiff work to keep from slipping into the river. They were glad enough to be called, and most willing to keep

close to Pete. But one more scramble down the steepest of paths brought them to a wide, sandy beach and a stretch of half-quiet water between walls so high that only a ribbon of blue sky showed itself.

It was wisdom on the part of the guide to permit the boys to have a good rest on the plateau. He knew there would be no chance again that day. Once down, it took about a second for bags to be opened, and another for Pete to say:

"Hey, kids, get busy with your fishing. I 'll make the fire and frizzle all you bring in. No fish, no dinner."

Colonel Hargrave had seen to it that Billy and Teddy were supplied with the best fishing-tackle. He had offered to do the same for Rags, but his offer had been promptly refused.

"I ain't no *re*spect fer any er them knee-j'ints an' elbow-splits. As fer *me,* I can beat 'em any day wid a fat bait on de business end of a hook. Jes a plain hook j'ined to a stoutish

string, an' I asts nothin' of nobody. None er yo' butterfly fishin'-worms fer *me!*"

Of course everybody knows a little something about hooks and lines and flies and poles. But fishing in a creek, or even a lake, and tussling with a salmon in the Colorado River are about as much alike as boating on a horse-pond and sailing on the ocean before a spanking breeze. Few sports could touch the real fun of battling with a fish as fierce as the river. The salmon must have felt it was about their dinner-time. They seized at the bait as a school-boy snatches at a jam sandwich. They played with it, wrestled with it, and at times almost ran away with it, bait, hook, and line.

It took some side-stepping, and front-stepping as well, to keep a footing on the uneven rocks, and engage in a kind of boxing-match with an invisible fighter. The fish were such good pullers, about every other minute each one thought he had hooked up something as big as a whale. The fun grew furious. The more

they had of this, the better they liked it. Then Billy cried out:

"I 've got him! Look out! Here I come!" But the fish had some ideas of his own; he was n't going out of that river till he had to. There were splashes of water, flashes of a silvery body struggling hard for freedom, bending the pole to the snapping-point, and then a quiet second when both boy and fish panted for breath. From the shore Pete shouted orders, that Billy never heard and could n't have obeyed if he had. Hanging to his pole with a mighty will was the best he could do. His reel must have had a trick of working itself, for Billy never knew just how it happened, but after one last furious round of struggle he found himself on shore, and Pete was taking the fly from a beauty of a salmon. He held it up admiringly.

"Say, Mister Billy Willyum, that 's some salmon for the first time. He 'll tip the beam at a pound, sure. Try it again?" But Billy said pantingly:

"No, thank you. One fight a day 's enough for me. I 'll watch the other fellows."

The other fellows had two small fish for their work. They had not gone out as far as Billy. When they saw his big prize there was nothing to do but try for the same thing.

"Come on, Rags!" urged Ted. "Let us go out to the same rock where Billy was."

"All right, Teddykins, ef you jes has to; but I 'm telling you right now I ain't carin' nothin' 'bout coaxin' fishes f'om dis heah ragin' ocean."

By careful stepping Ted and Rags reached the rock in safety. Steadying themselves, they stood side by side. One cast his fly, the other his old-fashioned cork and hook. Instantly there was turmoil in the waters. Teddy's bright fly went flashing under the wavelets, and Rag's hook quickly disappeared. The tussle was on in earnest. At first it was great fun to see the lines spinning around in a circle and to feel the strong pull that used all the leg and arm muscles a fellow happened to have handy. But there comes a time when the best

of muscles are ready to take a holiday, and that 's the way Rags and Ted were beginning to feel when the latter gave a yell:

"I 've hooked him, Rags! I 've got him! Help me pull!"

Rags, having troubles of his own, only took time to yell back:

"Is you? 'Pears ter me he 's done got you." What he saw a moment later made his skin all goose flesh. Ted, striving to hold fast to bending rod and keep his feet on at the same time, slipped on the rock to the very edge of the sweeping current.

In an instant Rags was doing as many acrobatics as the fish.

"Look out, Teddy! Hol' tight, honey! Wait a minute; I 's comin'." Quickly he tied his line about his ankle, jumped, swung both arms about the smaller boy, and down the two went together, with just enough of them above the water for a hand of each to clutch the crevices in the rocks.

"He 's pulling my arm off!" yelled Ted, still holding tight.

"Don't you loose him, Teddy! Don't you do it! He 's a bluffin' ol' flap-tail. I 'll fix 'im." But the heavy line tied to Rags's leg pulled one way, Ted's pole was tugged the other, and as neither fish nor fishermen would give up, the struggle was a tie.

Billy and Pete saw it all from the shore. Billy would surely have been terrified had not Pete seemed to think it about the funniest thing he ever saw. He slapped his legs, held his sides, threw up his arms, and laughed till it set the cañon ringing.

"Hold hard, kids! I 'm coming." Then he calmly waded out and brought in boys, poles, lines, and two good-sized fish.

"Thought you was gone, did n't you?" he asked as he made the boys dry their clothes, while he set the frying-pan on the fire. "Well, you 's plumb plucky to swing to your job. Salmon trout is plain tigerish. Some surprise

coming to 'em when you kids swung on as you did."

"Maybe so, Pete, but you laughed awful hard. Was n't you afraid we 'd get drowned?"

"Not so long as I was hanging round. And, you see, these fishes fights worst in shallow water. Say, you two hold-me-tight kids, swinging to rock and fish at one end and the same time, was the funniest—" Pete could n't finish for laughing.

The fire crackled, and the fish frizzled. There was a sparkle in the air, a snap in the little breeze. The mighty rocks and rushing river shut out the great world. The sun peeked down a narrow crevice and saw in this little spot a busy, contented man and three thrilly boys and an old mountain sheep that had wandered close to make sure of scraps. And that same sun never shone on city or town or village that held more chance for clean sport and happiness.

Lunch over, Pete advised his companions to

gather up their traps and come around to Wishbone Cove.

"But, Pete," queried Ted, "how *can* we go any further without a boat?"

"Maybe we will swim down, or ride on an eagle's back," teased Pete. Little wrinkles of worry began to show just above the biggest wrinkle on Ted's nose. In a second Rags was ready with comfort.

"Honey, don't you pay no min' to Marse Pete's foolishments. Dat man could scoop a ship outer de hills ef he sot his min' to it."

Teddy mostly believed there was some truth in all things Rags told him, so he trudged along, trying his best to whistle as he walked.

After leaving the smooth, sandy beach, the path ran right by the water's-edge. There was more watching of steps than wagging of tongues. Farther on, hidden by a rock that stuck its head out into the river, lay another beach, the shape of a great wishbone and as smooth as a floor.

In the middle of this, backed up against a

hole in the rock, stood a small one-room tent. Its patches and its color told all-comers it had stood in that spot a long, long time. And if Robinson Crusoe had come out of a bear's cave, dressed in pajamas and a blue poke-bonnet, the boys could n't have been more surprised. Their arrival brought to the tent door a shaggy little old man as patched as his tent.

Pete seemed to have met an old friend. He waved his hand and called:

"Hello, Uncle 'Thusela. I swan, if you ain't looking just as young as a kitten!" Coming toward them, the old man made a funny noise in his throat, which sounded more like a creaking door than a laugh.

"Right, Petey. Ain't never going to get old. Been here sixty year; countin' on fifty more. Cañon folks don't never die; jes dries up and blows 'way. Come for boat? She 's waitin'."

Wonder at the old man kept the boys silent; and yet there were a hundred things they wanted to know at once. What was he doing

A shaggy, little old man, as patched as his tent

up there? How did he know Pete wanted the boat? Was n't he a hundred years old right then? How could he live fifty more?

So long as Uncle 'Thusela stood talking to Pete no questions could be asked. The minute he turned his back to go and fetch the boat, that minute the boys' questions fell over one another.

"Say, kids, takes more 'n ten minutes to narrate a tale what 's been going on nigh unto eighty years. 'Thusela ain't his name, but that 'll do. More 'n sixty years ago he hit the cañon; huntin' for gold, he was. He 's still a-huntin'. He 's tramped every foot of trail, and clumb rocks for miles a-goin' and a-comin.' Back 'bout thirty years he staked his claim right here, and here he 's been. Oncet a year he hikes for an Indian settlement hundreds of miles up-stream, trades skins for bacon and beans and maybe a little flour. Comes back, and starts huntin' again. 'Long comes some city prospectors; they soon gives up the job, and 'Thusela gets the boat. He rents it out

seventy-five cents a trip. Two trips a year is about the record."

"But," puzzled Billy, "how does he get his boat back up over the rapids?"

"Fetches it on his back, overland."

"Not that old man! He could n't carry a boat on his back!"

"Yep," replied the guide. "It can be did—in Arizony. Just like he says, ain't no growing old. They 's a liniment in the air what stiffens a man's muscles till they ain't no more to stiffen. Give him time and he just natchelly withers up and goes to dust. That is," Peter went on, "if he can always get his feed. Lacking that, something might happen."

"Well, Pete, why did n't you help Mr. 'Thusela bring the boat?" asked Ted.

" 'Cause I war n't huntin' no trouble. And 'Thusela won't 'low nobody to mention by mouth or hand he ain't young and hefty."

"Can he bring the boat by himself?" Ted inquired anxiously.

"Can he? Look yonder!"

They looked just as the boat shot around the curve like a champion crew pulling for the line. The old man rowed close in, jumped out, steadying the craft.

"All 'board! No, thanky, Pete; no extras," he said as Pete tried to slip an extra quarter into his hand.

"Good luck, boys! Come see me ag'in," he called as the passengers took their seats and the boat shoved off from shore. Ted and Billy and Rags waved their hands and halloed good-by to the lonely old man standing on a lonelier shore. Pete yelled back a cheerful joke. Then the current caught the small craft, sending it swiftly toward the rapids. All too soon Mr. 'Thusela with his long, white hair was lost to sight.

"Marse Pete," asked Rags, speaking for the first time, "ain't you s'posen that Mister 'Thusela gemen 's powerful lonesome, wid no folkses 'n' no churches 'n' no groceries, nor even nothin' to argify wif?"

"Lonesome? In the cañon?" exclaimed

Pete, truly amazed at the thought. "Nit and nixy, Rags. Folks what learns the ways of the cañon, and the million things as are in it, don't need nothing else round. As to argifying, well, that ain't no good. Things just is or ain't, that 's all."

With the boat going faster and faster every minute, nobody seemed to have anything to say till Pete commanded:

"Close down! Every fellow sit tight!" Before every seat lay a hinged top. When each part was in its place, it covered the whole boat and the passengers to a point above the waistline. This left arms and head free, keeping the legs dry and the boat from filling when the waves went over it. The boys obeyed, snapped down the tops just as the last quiet stretch of water ended. Great walls of marble towering upwards fifteen hundred feet, crowded the foaming water into so narrow a place that it raged like a thousand maddened tigers. It swirled around the rocks and lashed at the cliffs. Pete had only time to shout:

"Hang on! Don't get scart!" before the boiling current caught the little craft and hurled down the raging waters of the great Sockdologer Rapids. The roar was like the voice of some awful monster greedy to eat boys and boat. Pete, strong and sure, kept to the middle of the stream, stern ahead, pulling first on one oar and then on the other, skilfully avoiding rocks and whirlpools. The boat rolled and plunged; it went faster and faster, Then everything seemed to drop away; things reeled and turned, and all took a downward plunge as steep as a shoot-the chute. Wild waters rolled over boat and people. Every boy was sure it was the end; but every time the small craft staggered out from under the weight of the water there was always Pete, with cheerful, wet face, saying "That ain't nothing. We can do it again." At last the waves grew less turbulent, and the sweep of one more splendid curve brought them to placid waters.

Everybody drew a long breath. Pete

shipped his oars and let her drift for a minute's rest. He lighted his pipe, then glanced at his companions.

"Sockdologer's the only name for it. How'd you like it, kids?"

"Plain bully," breathed Billy.

Each boy had been speechless with excitement, thrills of fear and delight, and something else as well. Pete was to them the most splendid man in the world. Big enough and strong enough to bring them safely out of that wild ride through mad waters where death seemed skipping along every wave. Admiration nearly consumed them; they were almost afraid to talk. But when they saw that after he had whipped the Sockdologer to a finish Peter was the same friendly comrade, they found their voices.

"My goodness, Pete," said Ted, "how did you ever learn to shoot the rapids? Were n't you afraid to try?"

"First time I shot," replied Pete, with a

smile, "I did n't go to do it. Got caught, and just had to get out. Took me half a day to do it, and I lost my boat. Right then I says to 'em, 'You like to got me this time; next time I gets you.' See? Took me two years to lick 'em."

"Marse Pete, is you a prayin' gemmen?" asked Rags.

"Why, Rags?"

" 'Cause all the time we 's floppin' th'ough them waters I 's thinkin' ef that was my job I 'd sho turn 'zorter. Mammy says they ain't nothin' like bein' a 'zorter to keep up yo' sperrits."

"Well, I don't know nothing 'bout 'zorting, but I does know 'bout keeping your muscles like rock and the machinery in your head well 'iled and nimble. A hefty body and a saw-tooth mind is what this cañon hands out to them as loves it. Now swing on your sweaters and we 'll pull for home."

But a sorrow was in store for them, for

when Camp Jolly was regained there was no dog. Reddy's straw bed was empty; the rope was lying on the ground.

" 'T war n't no dog ontied that rope," said Pete, investigating. "And it war n't no Indian. Them turned-out-toed footprints are white man's, and he come soon after we left, for there 's the food and water ain't been touched." Pete scratched his head. "See if anythin 's missing, boys."

So far as could be seen everything was there. The colonel's neat tent, his instruments, papers, and clothing, the boys treasures, and all the camp belongings were exactly as they had been left. Only Reddy was gone.

"His boss must have found him and took him away," said Pete.

CHAPTER IX

THE next morning, long before the sun had had time to shoot one of his warming-up streaks into the depths, a saucy little breeze went to work, loaded itself with all the odors of Pete's cooking, hopped straight through the sleeping-tent, and tickled three noses with smells of a delicious breakfast. It disturbed Rags first, and from his tent came a shout.

"Leave it alone, man! Don' you tech that tub! Go 'way f'om heah!"

"What 's the matter?" cried Ted and Billy, running to the rescue.

Rags was sitting up in bed, fighting like a Comanche, and it took a good hard shake to make him open his eyes. Then he whooped with laughter.

"Lawsy me! ef I war n't a-dreamin' 'bout a

great big hobo tryin' to nab a wash-tub of mammy's flapjacks! It 's that flavor a-hittin' my nose. Breakfus', did anybody say? Excuse me, gemmen, till I draps into my gyarmints."

"Garments nothing," said Billy. "You know we have to go swimming before we dress."

"And the water is right out of the ice-tank," encouraged Ted.

"That 's right; you boys keep on with this swimmin' business, an' fust thing you know you 'll be playin' with a' icicle."

The swimming-hole was nothing but a baby pool snuggling close to a gray-green cliff that helped to shut off the keen north winds. Every day the sun played tag with the wavelets and warmed up the water a bit.

The boys, with red blankets tied over their pajamas, ran shouting to the beach, flung off their coverings, each in its own pile, and plunged into the pool. Billy remembered afterward that he had left his behind a bush.

Never before was heard such a noise. The old rocks took it up and made the most of it; mountain sheep, animals small and large, pricked up their ears and made for cover; birds flew in excited circles; in truth, the inhabitants of the cañon could n't make out what was taking place far below, where two white bodies and one brown one splashed and dived and ducked in the blue waters.

Then through the din of whoops and yells came the notes of the bugle, and three boys made record time getting out of the pool, for in all sunlit Arizona no frisky young animals were half so ready for breakfast as they.

Two boys wrapped red blankets round their wet bodies. The third, Billy, could n't find his and could n't stop to search, so snatching up his pajamas, he ran back to camp with the others and scuttled into his clothes.

It was the habit of Wild-cat Pete to eat whenever he got up, which was whenever he opened his eyes, usually some time before the great morning star had twinkled a last good-

by to earth. So on this morning, as on others, he had his breakfast, and was free to cook and fill the plates while the boys ate. There was more cañon wisdom stored away in Pete's head than could be found in a good-sized library. When the boys had all they could hold he said:

"I have to go hunt Blackie this morning. I heard galloping last night. I think a pack of wild burros must have come and persuaded that donkey to go off with them. Years ago some prospectors, running short of grub and fodder, let loose all their burros, and the animals went out on their own, and have kept right ahead adding to their family and growing wilder and wilder ever since."

"Let us go with you to hunt Blackie," cried Billy.

"Not as I see it, Son. While Blackie is a perfectly good mule at heart, he 's same 's every cañon burro—has a strain of the wild in his blood. If his keen nose once smelt the pack, he 'll be leading them by now, and I have to go quick; and I know the things that three

boys would want to be stopping for every minute. You boys fix up the camp as usual, and then you can take the boat and go down the river a bit. But don't go far, and be sure to get back here for lunch."

So Pete left, taking only a bridle and his lariat.

Breakfast done, the boys went to their usual tasks. In making his bed Billy remembered the red blanket that he had left at the swimming-place. He went down the path to the beach, tying on Hoo Lung's sash. He didn't see the blanket anywhere. As he was searching, he heard a dog bark. Reddy, of course, and near by. That dog had evidently got into some more trouble, but Billy was glad to hear his bark. The gray-green cliff wasn't very high, but it was pretty steep. It proved how rapidly Reddy must have recovered that he could climb it. Evidently he was afraid to come back. Funny they hadn't heard him bark before.

Billy was up the cliff in a jiffy. Again he

heard a dog bark, but farther on. Without thinking, Billy heedlessly followed. He was searching in a clump of thick bushes when he felt himself suddenly seized by the belt. A blow on the head made him see stars for a second, and then for a time he knew nothing.

When he recovered, he was securely strapped in a blanket, and from the motion he knew that he was on the back of some animal, a pack-mule, perhaps. He tried to scream, but his mouth was gagged; he tried to kick, but his ankles were tightly bound. His hands also were bound, and the cords and the gag hurt. The Indians had got him sure! Was this to be the end of Billy Hargrave?

His head still swam so, that he could n't think straight, and at times he was only half-conscious. The mule went uphill and down, but in what direction Billy could not tell. Whoever guided it never spoke a word except to grunt out something to the animal. All count of time was lost; whether it was morning, noon, or night the boy could not have told.

He was very tired, and his head ached fiercely. It began to rain, and the water soaked in little dribbles through his blanket.

Then the jolting ceased, and two voices began to talk. Some orders were given in a strange lingo. Billy felt hands busy with him; he was taken off the mule, still strapped, gagged, and rolled in his blanket. He heard an animal's trot getting fainter and fainter; he was picked up and carried for what seemed a long distance; then he was slung in a sort of hammock and let down somewhere, to rest on something hard. He was unrolled, hands and feet were untied, and the gag was taken out of his mouth.

Then he had one of the great surprises of his life. No Indian was his captor, but a white man, and a good-looking one at that. He was a well-formed man, face tanned and scarred, with black mustache and goatee, just as Billy imagined bandits ought to look. His eyes were handsome, and something about them—was it the way they dropped at the cor-

ners?—seemed familiar. But he didn't like this being too close together. The man wore a broad-brimmed hat, picturesque, but rather flappy for the cañon, and round his waist, looking as if it were drawn too tight, was a sash like Billy's, only drab in color.

He sat, with his hands on his knees, in a niche cut in the wall of what seemed to be a stone room. In other niches were various possessions, a gun, some great stone jars covered with cobwebs, and some curious utensils that were new to Billy. Looking round in wonder, the boy saw that from floor to roof every inch of this strange dwelling was carved with stories—battles, hunting-scenes, storms. On the floor was a lot of straw. In a corner were some tin cans with labels, showing that they had been made and filled in Maine. This hole in the wall had been prepared to receive him, and Billy was sure that it had once been the home of one of those cliff-dwellers. He looked at the man, and the man looked at him. Neither spoke.

"I suppose you know who I am," at last the man said.

"No, I don't. Who are you? What do you want with a boy like me? I have n't ever done anything to you."

"Oh, have n't you?" said the man, sneeringly.

"No, I have n't, and you know it," said Billy. He was mad, not frightened. "But maybe what you don't know is that my father is a United States officer, and what the Government 'll help him do to you if anything happens to me will be a plenty."

The man laughed. It was an ugly laugh that lifted one side of his mustache in a way that Billy at once hated.

"So they have brought you up to believe that you are the Hargraves' own son! Just like 'em! You are my son, and your name is Theodore Colville."

"Nothing of the kind," began Billy, and stopped suddenly. This man was Teddy's father. Probably he thought he had the right

to carry off his own son. Suppose it had been poor fat, little Teddy?

The man went on:

"They took you away from me when you were born and your mother died. They stole you. Stole, yes, that 's the word. And I find that they have even made you believe you are their own child. They have never let me see you, and I have n't been rich enough to claim you before; but now I 've got gold,—lots of it,—and you are going to share it with me." He took from his pocket a chamois-skin pouch, and from it extracted two or three dirty yellow nuggets.

"But I tell you I am not your son. Father told me all about you and how you are trying to worry them; but you 've taken the wrong boy."

"You 're a smart lad, ain't you? But you can't alter facts or change your looks. You 're your mother over again. You look more like her than her own sister does. So you thought you were their own child?" he con-

tinued musingly. "Did you think they had two children?"

"No; I tell you you 've got the wrong boy. I am not Teddy Colville; I 'm Billy Hargrave."

"It was a clever dodge to make you believe it, changing round like that; and both of you so near the same age made it easy. Well, you take after me in one way, if not in looks. You are a boss yarner, to call it by a soft name. I always was an artist in that line, so you should take to it naturally. But I don't believe they call you Billy Hargrave. I have reasons for knowing that they called you Ted. The other boy 's Billy; but whether Billy or Ted, you are my son, and I have a right to do as I choose with you."

By this time it had become very dark, and the wind was roaring fiercely. Colville lighted a lantern and opened a can of baked beans.

"We 'll eat something, and then you can go to sleep. Phew! what a storm! We did n't get here any too soon."

Billy obeyed in silence. He realized that he was in a curious situation, but that his life was not threatened, and when he lay down in the straw a generous thought came into his head:

"I 'm kind of glad he made the mistake. I 'll get back safe, and what fun to see how mad Old Whiskers will be when he finds out his mistake! Suppose it had been Ted! He might have the right to keep him. But then—"

Suppose the man was telling the truth. Tired as he was, these thoughts awakened him off and on through the long, stormy night.

CHAPTER X

RAGS and Ted didn't miss Billy until each had finished the morning's duties. Then they called and, receiving no reply, ran down to the swimming-pool.

No Billy.

"Do you think Pete let him go with him, after all?" asked Ted.

Rags speculated.

"Co'se Billy and Marse Wildcat Pete knows you is puffickly safe with me, an' he might have 'suaded him. Le' 's wait a minute, an' ef he 's jes hidin', and playin' one of his pranks, don' take no notice. We 'll get the boat and go up the river, jes like Marse Pete say, an' the laugh 'll be on Billy when he fin's we ain't troublin' none to look for him an' are havin' a good time all by ourse'ves."

Ted hesitated a moment and then gave in;

but he left a note on the front of the tent, saying where they had gone. Then getting into the boat with Rags, he rowed to the quiet stretch of water that Pete had indicated.

Both of the boys were lonely. They had missed the colonel, and now they did n't have Billy. Making fast the boat, a game of pirates held them for a while; then they tried their luck fishing. But the trout were neither hungry nor playful, and there was n't a mite of fun waiting for them to be either. Two boys were beginning to wonder whether the cañon was really as exciting as they had at first thought it; and, as if they had done their thinking aloud, the great chasm rose right up and gave a long and thrilling answer.

They were idly skipping stones over the river when suddenly a clatter of hoofs came rattling down a near-by ravine. The boys turned swiftly, and saw a band of wild burros trotting toward them, at the sight of which they gave a wild whoop; for the leader was small and black, and stuck his stubby white

nose high in the air. One glimpse of any two-legged thing was enough for the shaggy, long-eared company. Whirling, it fled up the ravine, back, far out into the rocks, to the wilds.

"It 's Blackie! Let 's catch him!" cried Ted and the two started to run after the pack. They had about as much chance of overtaking a Derby winner. All they saw was a flourish of Blackie's heels as the band disappeared, leaving only the echoes of flying hoofs to tell that they had been near. Blackie well knew who was pursuing him. He had been the pet of the camp and the star performer in all circus games; now he was out for a holiday. Fiercer than a jungle kangaroo, snorting like a baby elephant, he raced away with his band, leaving the two boys with their trouble for their pains.

The way back to the river was not difficult to find. By this time the young campers had learned to read signs in the bushes, the bark on the trees, and the streams. Returning to the

smooth, white beach where they had been playing when Blackie and his gang of bandits had disturbed them, the two boys found themselves tired and hot from their futile excursion into the ravine.

"Let 's cool off and wait for Billy, and then go swimming some more," said Ted.

But Billy did n't come.

"I tol' you he 'd gone with Marse Wildcat Pete. Billy did n't mean to play a trick, but I bet he 'suaded Marse Pete to let him go 'long."

Ted was a little puzzled.

"You don't think anything 's happened to him, do you, Rags?"

"Shucks! I 'd like to see any scrape Billy Willyum get into he could n't get out. 'Sides, they ain' no wild animals nor nothin' roun' here."

Ted grew hopeful, and with Rags soon forgot, in the water, burros and boys and puzzling things. It was great sport to start the boat, seize the stern as it passed by, and take a

plunge over the shallow rapids. Then they would guide the craft back to smooth water, haul it ashore, and begin all over again. Pete had taught them to do this, and no one could deny that it was ripping sport.

Neither can one deny that fun like this eats up time. The youngsters were so absorbed in their game they failed to notice that a bank of cloud had shut out the sun. Ted was the first to discover it.

"Say, Rags, look at that big white cloud falling down the gorge."

Neck deep in water, the two watched the bank of gathering mist. It was wonderful to see it come swiftly and silently, taking on the color of the rosy cañon as it fell lower and lower.

"Hurry, Ted! les' 's git outer here," cried Rags when he saw the coming of the great white wall. "Watch this colored gemman hop into his waitin' robes."

"Quit your fooling, Rags!" said Ted, dressing himself rapidly, while he eyed the ap-

proaching fog. "Jump into the boat and pull for all you 're worth for the camp."

Ted sat facing the mist. It looked like some terrible white monster in hot pursuit. So silent, too, it was enough to put an edge on anybody's nerves. One minute a splendid tree or, maybe, an eagle or a mountain sheep could be seen, and the next it was lost in something as light as a feather, but so thick that the strongest search-light could not have penetrated it. No wonder the boy fidgeted.

"Keep still, Ted, or you 'll spill us out."

"Rags, I 'm so afraid it 's going to cover us."

Then Rags proved his mettle; he had his back turned to the mist.

"Don' you get scared, honey! Jes he'p me shove this ship along. We 'll skip over the high places an' git on the home-stretch in less 'n a minute. Ain't nothin' like an ol' fog goin' to ketch us boys."

Then Rags looked back, intending to thrust out his tongue at the fog just to show it how unafraid he was. One glimpse was enough.

"It 's a *hant!* a *hant!* Hurry, Ted! *Pull! pull,* I say!"

White arms and black ones pulled on the oars as they had never pulled before. Backs strained, oars bent. The little boat did its best, and responded bravely, but the bank of cloud was a good racer, too. Whipped to greater speed by a current of air which came tearing through the cañon, it overtook the flying boat with the boys and silently closed down.

It was like wrapping up a toy in tissue-paper; faces and figures were almost blotted out, but not for an instant did the two stop rowing.

Rags shouted to Ted, and Ted to Rags. One urging one thing and one another, the rowing became desperate and so uneven that the oarsmen's ideas became fatally twisted as to the right direction.

"We 're going round and round," cried Ted.

"We 's coming to smooth water sure," shouted Rags; but before he had closed his

mouth a sound caught his ear that sent hope hopping away into the thickest of the mist. The sound became a roar. It was unmistakable. There was n't another like it in the world. Wildcat Pete had time and again warned them about this very place. In a minute the boys knew they were headed not for Camp Jolly, but for the most dangerous rapids in the cañon.

Before they had time to breathe, a swift current snatched away the oars, and was tossing the helpless boat from wave to wave. Then, scornful of so small a plaything, it sent it smashing into splinters against a sharp rock, hurling the two boys into a quiet pool behind it.

To their great surprise, they found themselves alive; that, too, without a leg or an arm or even a tooth missing. When they found they could see each other's faces and even a faint shoreline, they laughed. It was enough to make anybody laugh to think they were not dead, or at least broken into bits, and to find themselves scot-free in a safe place.

"Are you hurt, Rags? I 'm not."

"Nor me," said Rags. "I fell on my head. Cracky! the buckingest broncho r'arin' up on its hind legs could n't beat that boat."

"But how are we going to get back?" asked Ted, anxiously.

"We 'll have to hoof it, Honey. We goin' to git a hike on that 'll surprise our footsies. Fust we 'll git outer this water."

Wading ashore was easy, but the same wind that had helped lift the fog chilled the boys to the bone.

"Let 's run up and down to keep warm. I know the way back. When we are in camp the sun hits my back just like it 's doing now; only I wish it would hit a little harder, for I 'm cold."

"An' I 's goin' to be a snow-man ef we don' hurry."

Like a softly crumpled ribbon a strip of beach separated the water from the cliffs. They could keep warm by running up and

down, and as soon as they were warm, head for the camp.

The great cañon is a splendid playfellow. No magician's box could ever turn out greater surprises; but these surprises are sometimes as cruel as they are wonderful. This is what now happened. Every time the two boys ran up and down the white streak of sand they could see a little farther. Their clothes were nearly dry.

The wind grew stiffer. The gorge crept softly out of its misty covering, then cast it off, as a big boy casts aside a sweater to make ready for play. The setting sun turned painter, and colored the world a bright red. The way was clear for a short distance. The two boys raced in the direction of the camp up the crumpled ribbon of the beach.

It ended suddenly. Giant shears could n't have snipped it off cleaner. There was n't even the raveled end of a sand-bar. As if that was not surprise enough for one day, the cañon handed out another just as big. They were

on the wrong side of the river for Camp Jolly!

They did not discover this until they began hunting a place to climb. In the cliffs were many holes cut in the pink rocks; they were the openings of some of the houses of the cliff-dwellers. There could be no doubt of the location. The difficulties of reaching it had often been discussed by the colonel and Pete. The lost lads knew where they were and what they faced.

They had been away for hours and hours. Night was coming fast, and it really seemed as if they had come to the tip end of the world, with nothing to keep them from falling off. The cañon was now deadly still, and its bigness swallowed up the two boys as a whale gulps down minnows.

Rags could n't stand it another minute. He moaned as, rocking back and forth, he sat on the ground.

"It 's the hant! it 's the hant!—I tol' you he 'd ketch us. Whut we goin' to do now in

this wilderness of sorror, with no supper ner nothin'!"

Ted had n't an idea what they were going to do, and he was n't at all scornful concerning the hant. Forcing down a lump in his throat, he tried to put on a brave air as he said:

"Hush your croaking, Rags! The smartest ghost that ever was can't do anything more than float round in the air. This one has done his floating and quit. Come on now; maybe we can find something solid."

"It 's the big white hant, I tell you! He 's chasing us to *des*truction!"

"Please don't cry, Boberty, 'cause I 'm doing it, and it 's wasting time."

Rags stopped, and gave himself a thump on the head.

"Stop whining, Bob Lincum! Don' you know you promised Marse Tom to take care of his boys? Here, Ted, gimme your han'." The black hand closed round the white one, and the best that Rags had in him marched to the front.

The two had n't an idea what to do. They ran back to the place left only a few minutes before. Darkness came down, and water came up. In their efforts to keep out of it, they had to cling to the vines and bushes on the straight cliff. Once, in struggling for support, Rags grasped something that was neither bush nor vine.

"Hallelujah! I 's got hol' somethin' solid. Here, Ted. It 's a rope!"

Ted grasped it.

"Hooray! it 's a rope-ladder! Where did it come from?"

"I don' know nothin' 'bout its comin', but it's here, and I bet it 's a trail goin' to one of them Injum holes. Gimme room; I 'm goin' to climb up an' see."

But half-way up Rags had a new thought and stopped.

"S'posin' they 's Injuns up here?"

"Hurry, Rags! hurry! The water is touching my feet!"

This sent Rags scrambling over the rope-lad-

der and into the first opening he found. He investigated cautiously, and then, leaning out, called down:

"Nobody home. Hustle up, Ted Honey!"

Ted shinned up the swaying ladder like a squirrel running from the hunter.

The place in which the two boys found themselves was dark, but the bit of solid ground was better than the best Christmas gift. The last hour had been the hardest they had ever known. They had need of rest.

"My!" sighed Rags, "ain't I glad to feel that good ol' earth a-pressin' up."

"Suppose Indians do live here, what will they do to us?"

"Ain't no Injuns 'bout, Honey. If they 'd been any, they 'd of scolloped us with tommy-hawks the fust minute we rolled in they front do'."

"But maybe they 'll come back. They may have been out hunting."

"S'posin' they does? Scollopin' ain't no worser 'n drownin', am it?"

"Why did you keep that lamp so secret?"

"Well, it takes longer. Do you think Pete and Billy can find us here?"

"Aw, I don' know an' I don' keer," said Rags, indifferently, as if he were telling the truth.

"Well, if we have to stay here all night, let 's pretend we are doing it on purpose. Let 's be geography hunters, like Uncle Tom, and find out secrets for the Government."

"How we goin' to hunt joggerfy or nothin' in the dark?"

"Oh, we don't have to," cried Ted, remembering something. He became cheerful as he ran his hand into his pocket, bringing out a waterproof case. In a moment a small flashlight made a tiny bright circle in the dense gloom.

"Crack-loo!" cried the astonished Rags, blinking. "Why for did you keep that lamp so secret?"

"I was so scared I forgot. It didn't get wet, and Uncle Tom said it would burn for two whole hours."

"Well, I 's pow'ful glad we 's got it. Le' 's see where we are."

Turning the light this way and that, the boys could see the carved wall of cliff-dwellers' history and something besides: a sort of mattress, made of straw and covered with a blanket, an unopened box of matches, and tin cans, empty, but proving that man or men not long ago had camped there.

"I wonder who it was," said Ted.

"I ain't a-wonderin' now; I 'm jes a-thinkin' we 're safe up here. Maybe I ain' glad he left those matches so that we can make a fire."

It was real sport gathering the wood and starting a fire in the same great fireplace used hundreds of years before by a great people. Perhaps in front of this very hearth many a be-feathered and beaded Indian chief had held war-councils or smoked peace-pipes. But one thing is sure; none of them had ever found a fire so welcome as did these two waifs.

"Oh, don't that feel good!" cried Ted, trying to get warm all over at once.

"I can't think of nothin' better, 'cept a froze' watermillyon on a hot day," said Rags.

"If it was a hant that drove us here, I think he 's a pretty good sort, don't you? I 'm sorry we ate up all our sandwiches. Could n't you get that hant to bring us something for supper?"

"Looky here, Ted, I always is said they was good hants and bad ones. The bad ones is give' us a hard pull to-day; the good ones jes had to do somethin' on their own hook. But I ain't goin' to ask 'em too much. I kin wait for breakfus, but what I 's wantin' to know is how come all this driftwood and kindlin' up in this high place?"

"I don't know, but I 'm glad it 's here. We can ask Uncle Tom when we get back."

The flames from the dry wood rose high. As the boys became comfortable in body, they grew easier in mind. Ted leaned against a rock and went fast to sleep. Rags's eyelids became as heavy as door-weights, but he roused sufficiently to take Ted, lay him on the pallet

and cover him with the blanket, muttering:

"Goin' to be some job taking care of him; but promises is promises."

Usually Rags was the first to give up to drowsiness and a warm fire. He was more tired to-night than he ever remembered, but he was restless and uneasy. Something within began to say that things in this room were not so right as they looked. It was the piles of driftwood that troubled him most. Rags had once seen a flood on the Ohio River, and he remembered the wreckage the raging waters had left behind, the driftwood that had been caught even in the tops of the highest trees. The memory of that time could still make him shiver with terror. Wreckage and driftwood meant water out of its bed and on a wild rampage. The more he looked, the plainer everything about him said that in this very place where Ted and he were the mighty Colorado had once swirled. He could hear it rushing now, and it seemed very close.

Guided by the firelight, Rags crept to the

opening and cautiously peeped out. He gave a loud shriek and jumped back. The river almost filled the gorge.

He went to Ted and shook him, but sleep held him fast.

Then he went back to the doorway. Reaching out, he could easily touch the muddy waters coming from heavy rains up the cañon. The stars showed dead limbs and small trees rushing by. Something brushed his face. It was part of a haystack racing away on the flood. A little more, and the waters would be in the room. They were trapped.

The hant was not a good one, after all. It was the bad one's work, that white thing that saw them playing in his river with the boat. He had promised Marse Tom to take care of the boys, but how was he to fight a river and a hant at the same time?

Rags twisted his hands, trying to make some plan. Cords seemed to be tightening round his neck. When anxious or puzzled, he had a funny little habit of beating a tattoo on his

head with his fists. He did this now, repeating over and over:

"I 's got to fight, but what kin I do? I 's got to fight, but what kin I do?"

The drumming seemed to make his brain active. A song of his mother's shot through his mind; she always sang it when worry sat on her door-sill. All he could remember of it was:

Shut out the trouble;
It shuts out the sin.
It shuts out the hant,
An' he never gets in.

His mother was a 'zorter. She wanted him to be one, too. He would. He 'd be one right now.

Then for the first time in his life Robert Abraham George Washington lifted his voice to the "big Marster" in deadly earnest:

"Please roll them waters back and let Ted and me cross to dry lan' like the children of Israel. I 'se 'sponsible for this boy, an' I can't break my 'sponsibilities. 'Deed, I did 'spec' to be a jockey; but I 'll sho' drap that notion if

ever I git outer this mess. What mus' I do right now? How kin I wrassel with a hant an' a river an' a sleepy-headed boy?"

On and on went Rags; sometimes he sang; then he talked, and again he pleaded. Finally body and brain refused to work longer, and he rolled over, face downward, sound asleep, just before dawn was breaking.

Outside the rushing river gathered strength as it steamed on the way to the ocean. An owl swept by, hooting its fright. A mountain wolf howled for its lost young. Then came a long silence.

CHAPTER XI

ABOUT half-past five in the afternoon Pete arrived at the camp rain-soaked and battered.

"Whew! I 've seed rains, but Noah's prize flood could n't touch the one just let loose up on the mesa. Skeeters and rattle-snakes take that burro! Maybe he has n't led me a hike! And I have n't got him yet. Where are those boys?"

But no boys answered.

Could it be that, despite his orders, they had got to frolicking and, instead of being back in camp at lunch-time, they had been caught on the river?

"Hello, Pete, that you?" asked a voice, and Jack, the same guide who had gone with the colonel, appeared from the dining-tent with a sandwich in his hand. "Been waiting for you over an hour. Had a nap and some grub."

"What brings you back here, Jack? Nothing wrong with the colonel, I hope."

"Well, he 's in a stew all right. Long-distance was a fake. His wife never called him at all; but he found a letter,—regular blackmail it was,—saying that by the time he, the colonel, you know, got to El Trovar, the boy—the one named Ted—would be in his father's possession, and unless they come across immediately and soon, both him and the boy will be on the other side of the world."

"What sort of a settlement?"

"Only fifty thousand dollars. It seems the Kentucky law would give him the boy, but he 's willing to sell him."

"You say the colonel found that letter waiting for him? That was two, four days ago. I suppose it took you two days to get back here."

"Yep."

"Well, this morning both boys were here, and I 'm expecting them and the little chocolate drop back any minute."

"I wish I could get that news to the colonel,

but maybe he 'll understand. He told me to put Hoo Lung on to our signal-fires and send 'em along if the boy had been kidnapped. If we don't signal, he 'll know nothing has happened. He 's makin' telegraph and telephone wires hot and hopping, and sent me back here to warn you to keep the boys with you every second. The man—Colville is the name—has set a meeting to-day or to-morrow up at El Trovar. Take it from me, the colonel 's some captain. There 'll be doings when he sees Colville."

"Listen! What 's that?" interrupted Pete.

The guide threw up his head like a splendid animal scenting danger as Pete, also weather-wise, shouted:

"Quick! It 's coming! To the pack!"

The man followed him on the run. He knew what he meant. The crest of a great rise was rushing toward them. If it caught the mules and the burros, they would be swept away like straws. The men raced to the corral and flung down the bars, sending the animals

scampering up the hill. The next moment a great wall of water swept by.

"The boys! the boys!" groaned Pete.

"What boys?"

"Colonel Hargrave's kids. You saw them when you were here before. I let them go a mile or so down the river this morning. They have n't got back."

"Hiked up some ravine, maybe. They seemed smart boys, and this water runs out almost as fast as it runs in."

"We 've got to do something. The boys took the boat."

"Pete, we can't go on that river now. It 's sure death to us, and then it would n't help the boys."

"I know; but we 've got to do something. Here, let 's rig up a raft and have it ready. We must hunt those kids soon as day comes."

"Think we 'll find 'em, Pete? If they was boatin' when the river filled sudden-like—"

"If we don't find them, me for the spirit-land before I meet the colonel!"

Spare tent-poles, old pieces of lumber, small trees, and ropes were collected. In seeking nails, Pete went to the boys' tent and discovered the note left by Ted:

"Gone down the river. Come on."

Pete scratched his head.

"That was right thoughtful of 'em, but I had already said they could go. Do you suppose it means they come back to lunch, like I said, and, not finding me, they were up to something else and want me in it?"

"You sure one of the boys wrote that?" asked Jack.

"Yep, it's the youngest's—Ted's—writing."

"Then he ain't been took by the father, as the colonel's blackmail letter said?"

"Not a bit of it."

The men went to work, and between the two the raft began to grow. It was a hard task. The tools were crude, and the material was as crazy as a Chinese puzzle. Through the long hours the men worked, seldom speaking, never

stopping. Then just before dawn came a whining growl, and Reddy, with coat wet and full of burs, tongue lolling, crawled feebly to the circle of the lantern-light, then dropped exhausted on the ground.

Pete said something under his breath, then demanded aloud:

"Shining kingdom! where did you come from? Who coaxed you away from this camp? Where 's them boys?"

Just as if all Reddy had to do was to rise on his hind legs and tell all he knew!

Instead, he gave a feeble bark, thumped the ground with his tail, and tried to crawl back the way he had come.

Pete bade him lie down, knelt beside him, and looked steadily into the dog's weary eyes. Something that he saw made him clasp his hands and mutter as he picked a peculiar kind of bur from the dog's long hair.

"Well, I swan! If this pup has n't come more than fifteen miles!"

"How do you know?"

"Seraphims ain't no truthfuller than cañon collies. I know where them stickers grows. The dog was missing yesterday; had been took off. Now, I don't make out whether whoever took him is in trouble or whether he knows his best friends and come back. Maybe followed the kids this morning. I 'll give him a chance and see where he 'll take us."

"But fifteen miles, Pete, and maybe a wild-goose chase. The boys could n't go fifteen miles in the cañon without a guide."

"Only that far by trail, and they went by river. The dog could n't get back by river, so he took the trail. It 's some shorter by river, and the water is going down as quick as it rose —almost. You give the dog a bite, and I 'll stack a bit of fodder on the raft. Bet them young ones will be ready to eat a hayrick." But despite the careless words Pete looked anxious.

Pete tied the last log to the raft tight and fast, then dragged it to the edge of the falling river. On top he piled some sweaters and

heavy blankets. Into the dryest and warmest place sprang Reddy, and in a minute was sound asleep.

The men stood holding the ropes, ready, at the first sign of dawn, to launch the raft and go to the rescue of the lost ones.

It was a frisky bluejay that gave the first warning. A family of wrens, living near by in a clump of pines, took it up, and before a herd of mountain sheep could give three kicks and a wiggle it was morning.

The two men waited not an instant. Pushing out to the middle of the stream, they began to paddle in the direction that Pete knew the burs on the dog had come from.

"Though it is in exactly the opposite direction from which I said they could go."

"Hope we 're not wastin' time," said Jack.

The morning was as bright, the river as peaceful, as if there had never been such a thing as a flood since the cañon was made. About this time every living thing far and near

had joined in the chorus of welcome. The two guides paid little attention to the bleating, whistling, and singing going on around them. They paddled, gazing straight ahead.

Reddy, fresh and keen after his rest, set himself down on the very front edge of the raft, ears up, eyes bright, body tense. They paddled for miles without his giving a sign; then, at a certain point, he ran back and forth and let out such howls that the guides shouted in glad relief.

But Reddy behaved strangely. He barked and jumped up and down, but when the men landed, he stayed on the raft and howled. Then suddenly, with the most mournful wail, he sprang ashore, and was off down the sandy beach like a flash.

"What 's ailin' that pup? He 's actin' plumb crazy," said Pete, rubbing his hair until it stood on end. "Coaxes us straight here, and then chases off. What do you make of it?"

"Reddy 's same as all tramps. Don't hold

to no idee longer 'n it takes to think it. Think we 'd better look around here first?"

"I tell you what it is," said Pete, frowning harder than ever, "that dog 's struck two trails. Did you see how he sniffed the air when he began howling? I never like to hear a dog howl. At first he barked."

Pete scanned the cliffs closely, looking up and down and sidewise. In the rocks were ruins of cliff dwellers, row upon row, till the line reached nearly to the top of the cañon wall. Through these crevices and fallen stones he had guided the colonel until bit by bit the story of the powerful race had been pieced out. He knew all about these places. Great provision-houses for time of siege, rooms where women had weaved, baked, and ground corn in time of peace, and where in flood-time there was safe refuge. From one of these hung a grass rope, wet and soggy.

Pete took the bugle from his belt and gave the camp call to lunch. Up and down the cañon went the notes, echoed and reëchoed;

but failed at first to reach the ears of two boys who were sleeping the sleep of exhausted youth. Then it stirred to consciousness a small colored boy. He was dreaming of chocolate pie, and he was giving Reddy a part that, somehow, did n't taste good. He opened his eyes, and found that his pie was the dust he had got into his mouth as he lay face downward. But he heard the bugle all right. It was calling to breakfast. Rags rushed to the doorway. The river had lost its awful bigness. It lay far down in its bed as peaceful as a baby. And below, right on the bank, stood Pete and another man. Rags lay flat, waved his arms and yelled. The two guides waved back to him.

He rushed inside and shook the sleeping Teddy.

"Hurry up! Hustle! We ain't drownded. Hear me, Ted? We ain't drownded at all. The river 's gone; so 's the hant; and Wildcat Pete is callin' us to breakfus'! Lawzee! lawzee! I sho is some 'zorter!"

Ted knew nothing of what all this meant, but he heard the bugle and, running to the door, saw the two men waving and shouting, and was joyful indeed.

"Here, you kids, all right?"

"Yes, yes; we 're coming right down. Watch us."

"Be careful! one at a time! this rope is some stretchy after its soak."

Jack steadied it on one side, Pete on the other, and no acrobats ever dropped more nimbly to earth, no prisoners more gladly into friendly arms, than those two cold, hungry lads.

As he took Ted from the rope, Pete turned to the guide.

"This is the boy; he ain't missing at all. And now for Billy. What 's he waiting for?"

"Billy? Did n't Billy go with you, Pete? He did n't come with us yesterday morning. We thought you had taken him. We left a note for him."

Pete's scar-lined face looked almost savage

as he turned to Jack. At that moment Reddy ran back, whining, howling, trying his best to tell them something.

"We 'd better follow him," suggested Jack, and his voice was so stern Teddy began to sob. Rags began to mumble, and the dog continued to howl pitifully. Pete was so unsmiling that the boys knew something was awfully wrong. They did not even welcome the lost dog.

"We 'll make the raft fast and see what he wants," said Pete.

Then all followed Reddy.

For more than a mile he raced on ahead, uttering at intervals the low whine that had sounded so ominous to the two guides. They said nothing, but pushed ahead.

Then some object lying huddled up ahead in the path made Pete draw a sharp breath and halt the party.

"You stay here, boys, and let me and Jack see what that is." It is the colonel's boy, he thought, and went near.

He almost shouted his relief when he saw the body of an unknown man. He was dead and that recently; the body was still warm. He lay in a crushed heap, a broken rope still in his hands.

"It broke when he was coming down from one of those holes where he 'd probably went to get outer the flood," said Pete.

"Do you think it 's any good trying to pump life into him?" asked Jack.

"Not a bit. His neck—you see?"

Jack nodded.

The children could not keep away. That is to say, Teddy drew near, while Rags kept a respectful distance.

"Who was he?" asked Ted, his young face tender with sympathy.

"Who knows?" said Pete.

Who was he? The scrub-pines knew, the rocks, and the mighty walls knew, perhaps, but the cañon has many such secrets, and they are hard to solve.

They examined the man's pockets. There

was nothing to show where he came from. A small note-book had some short-hand figures, but no name. Some gold nuggets were found, small ones of little value, a few bits of silver, a couple of one-dollar bills, but not another thing.

"Probably a prospector hunting for that same gold," said Jack.

"Perhaps," said Pete. "Nothing to do but go back to camp, signal the colonel as soon as the light goes, and set the wheels a-goin' to trace the boy."

Rags, at first fearful, let his curiosity get the better of him. For a moment kindness of heart shut out the dread of the still form on the ground.

"Poor gemman! I 'spec' somebody 's waitin' for him. His ma, maybe, hangin' over the gate, looking up and down the road, and he never gittin' there."

Rags saw a picture of his own mother waiting for him, and he grew very sorry for himself. But Ted's eyes filled with tears, and he

began trembling. In a flash Rags changed his tune.

"No, sirree. I bet that ain't so at all. He looks to me jes like a no-'count loafer. I 'spec' he pestered his ma most to death. She ain't missin' him the leastest bit."

"Come on, Jack. Let 's get back to camp and decide what is the best thing to do. Billy might come and find us gone."

"Do you think we ought to leave the man that way?" asked Jack. "Let 's bury him and mark the spot. If anybody wants a missing man, they 'll know where to find him."

Pete agreed, and the two set to work. Rags refused to have any part in the digging; but after the body was covered with sand, he helped Ted gather leaves and branches. The big branches were laid on first, and with smaller twigs filling the spaces and pine-needles making a final layer, the mound disappeared under a covering, fresh, clean, woodsy, and as sweet as honey.

The men made a move to go when Ted said:

"I think we ought to say something, don't you. Rags, you 're going to be a 'zorter. Can't you say a piece or something?"

Rags grew ashy as he said:

"I jes can't do it. I 'd have to come close, and they ain't no elephant can make me."

"Well, anyhow, you can sing. Please, Boberty!" This name was dearly beloved by Rags.

"Ef you ain't the most pesterin' boy! All the songs I knows are jes pretty ones; nothin' cemetary 'bout 'em."

"Well, sing a pretty one, then."

"All right; but you got to come over here where I 's standin'."

The guides stood aside and whispered together, and Rags, in a mellow, bell-like voice, began a song. It was laden with sweetness and hope, and floated over the echoing cliffs. Ted joined in the refrain, his babyish mouth looking very tender and sorrowful. Could the man have heard and seen, he would have felt

that there is something in life more to be desired than gold.

This was Rags's song:

"If the work gets hard
And the day gets long,
Just sing and sing.

Lif' up your voice
An' jine in the song,
And sing, just sing.

If the hoe gets hebby,
And your backbone aches,
Just sing and sing,

For it lif's off the burden
And chirks up the heart;
So sing, just sing."

Then they left the sleeper alone with the grandeurs of the cañon and went back to the raft.

"Where 's that dog?" asked Pete.

"He 's the most disappearin' dog I ever seed," said Rags.

"I bet he went on ahead to tell Billy we are coming," said Ted.

"I hope so," said Pete.

It was a long and tedious jaunt back to the camp, but no Billy was waiting there.

Night saw signal-fires flashing from the cañon, saw them taken up at Indian Gardens, and answered at El Tovar, saw machinery set in motion, with the United States Government backing it.

CHAPTER XII

THE morning after his capture Billy awoke suddenly. The noise of rushing water had ceased, and the sun was shining brightly on the rim of the opposite cliffs, though it was still dark in the cañon. A silly rhyme was running through his head:

> "If it be I, as I hope it be
> I 've a little dog at home and he 'll know me.

Where was Reddy? And was it really Reddy who had got him into such a fix? At the other side of the room Colville lay sleeping on a pile of straw. He looked much older than when awake, and his neck was stringy and full of wrinkles. With his belt off, he was n't half so slim as Billy had thought. A flask by his side told the story. Billy shut off his desire to throw it down into the cañon; he must be as cautious as a fox. He felt much more cou-

rageous this morning; there was even a thrill in things as they were. Think of the things he'd have to tell afterward. The man would n't dare harm him; his father would be sure to lose no time tracing him, and what a joke on Colville when he found he had nabbed the wrong boy! He determined not to argue the son question with Colville. He knew the man could n't be right; he was Billy Hargrave. It would be best for him to lie low, say nothing, and keep watch.

Colville awoke in a bad humor and as thirsty as a sponge. He wet his throat, then lay down again on the straw, and began to tell of the mean way he had been treated by the Hargraves.

"You are lucky to be out of it. It will be a new life for you, boy. Instead of getting moldy in a little village, you 'll see the world. We 'll do everything and go everywhere. You 'll associate with crowned heads themselves."

Billy's idea of kings and queens was of some-

thing not exactly human—forms wearing crowns on their heads and seated on a throne day and night. In any case, the prospect did not tempt him. But he was curious about many things closer home, and became quite himself in asking questions.

"Was the collie yours?"

"Yes and no; take your choice."

"Did Hoo Lung—were you at Indian Gardens?"

"I can say 'Yes' to that. That is, I had a man there to represent my interests. The truth is, at that time I was at the Hargrave house in Elkhurst and was giving a certain person there a bad quarter of an hour, as we say in France. If I had known you were starting on this trip, I would have saved you the expense of the fare."

"And Hoo Lung was helping you?"

"Not exactly. That Chinaman is too simple. I 'd never let him on to this game. All I asked of him was to give the boy I wanted the belt you are wearing this minute. You

see, my boy, as I had never seen you, I did n't know you by sight; neither did the Indian who was in my employment."

The man put on a pompous air in speaking, as if he had hordes of minions at his beck and call. It impressed Billy not a little. But he was glad that Hoo Lung was not a traitor, he had been so friendly. What he had done had been through habit of obedience and no questions asked.

"How did you find out we had come to the cañon?"

"A man in the house next to yours told me."

"Old Taylor! I 'll see to him if I ever get back!" thought William.

"Ain't that about enough questions? Young fellow, I 've gone to lots of trouble over this thing; you can see for yourself that I have. If you think a minute, you will also see that you are lucky to have a father who knows every inch of this cañon. I am going to leave you to-day on financial matters; yes,

matters involving many thousands of dollars, and there 's nothing for you to do but stay here. You can't get out, as you don't know how to climb a straight wall many hundreds of feet high. I do. But I sha'n't tell you. If I did, you 'd get lost in the cañon, and maybe we would n't ever find your body. You 'd starve to death. So you 've got to stay where you are. And you 're in the safest place in the world. You 've got food and water, and in about two days I 'll come back, knowing something definite about the money owing me, and then off we go to the great world."

"You mean off you go," thought Billy. "Let him get his money, and try to take me anywheres if he dares."

Billy had been sure that on their arrival he had been let down; but Colville, on leaving, did not go up. He took a rope from a niche and fastened it to a sort of catch under a flat stone that lay near the entrance.

"This is my patent," said Colville. "I let myself down, draw in my rope, and so on.

I 've got a regular staircase of springs. Would n't those Pueblos have liked it?"

Waving his hand, he swung down the rope, and gave it a hard twisting jerk. Billy heard a spring click under the stone, and the rope loosened and was drawn down, leaving him alone in a cliff-dwelling in the grand cañon. He leaned out of the doorway. He saw the going-down process repeated from a place not directly below him, but toward the left; and that was his last sight of the man.

"He 's fixed those catches all the way down," thought Billy.

Billy remembered the conversation with his father, and he realized that Colville was right: it was a safe place in which to leave a prisoner, especially a new-comer in the cañon. The only course was to stay where he was until he was released. His father would be summoned as quickly as Pete could get to him. In the meantime he must find some way to keep a signal flying, so that if friends came near they would notice something unusual. Those quick

eyes of Wildcat Pete's would n't miss things.

Billy made a thorough exploration of his quarters, and for a time was interested. His father would have found the employment more absorbing, for the boy had too many other things to think about to delve into the secrets of ancient peoples.

It was queer how things happened. He had exactly the same feeling against Colville that he had had against Miss Breck when she had locked him in the attic bedroom. It did n't seem a bit bigger thing to be confined in this old Pueblo attic. But all that first business, was n't it a sort of forecast of what was now happening? The bee affair, the locking-in, the escape—just as if fate were teaching him in advance or trying to tell him what was going to happen. Was it a sort of practice for what was coming, a rehearsal, as in the theater?

As the day passed, Billy became bored to death. He had seen all there was to be seen in his dwelling, and he was sure that it did not contain even a ghost of a rope. Colville had

seen to that. When he thought about the alarm his absence must be causing he could scarcely bear it. He little knew that certain events had prevented him from being missed up to that time, and he felt sure that his father and the guides, maybe soldiers, too, were on his track at that moment.

It grew dark, and he lighted the lantern, on second thought putting it on the outside ledge, where it would shine up and down the cliff. If anybody came near, it would attract attention. It might be savage Indians; but he had to take that chance, and they could n't be worse than Colville. At least they would n't claim him for a long-lost son.

Putting the light outside left the place dark within, and, in stumbling around, Billy had an unfortunate accident. He upset the bucket that contained his entire water-supply. He sopped up as much as he could with his handkerchief, but it dribbled out the opening before he could save more than a tumblerful. There was n't another drop of water up there.

Those old stone jars held nothing but dust and bugs. Well, it did n't matter. Colville would n't let him die of thirst.

Then Billy succeeded in forgetting his trouble for a time in sleep, but awoke before it was day, to find that the lantern had burned itself out, and there was n't another candle at hand. He went to sleep again, and dreamed that he was in the den and was writing:

no seldnac dnes Pans.

And Snap was barking! It awoke him, that bark, and he sprang to the entrance and leaned out as far as he dared. Was it Reddy?

"Here, Reddy! Here, Reddy!"

Even if it was Reddy, he could n't send a message by him, for the dog could n't get down the straight cliff. Snap, the den—what playthings compared with this!

Billy was aging rapidly.

Colville had not come back, as he promised. There was food enough, but that water accident made complications. Maybe these cliffs

were not so far from Camp Jolly as he thought. If he had a rope he might make it. This was the beginning of the third day, and anything was better than staying up here doing nothing. No light at night and no water by day! If only he had a rope!

He had his sash!

What a joke on Colville, going away like that and leaving his prisoner a way to escape by the very thing that had led to his capture!

The sash was good and strong. It was made of pure silk and was long. If it would reach to the same hole that Colville had swung to when he left, he 'd probably find another spring like the one up here.

Billy investigated the contraption under the flat stone and thought he could work it. He clicked the ring at the end of his long sash, and worked it several times to be sure he knew how.

Then he filled his pockets with crackers. He could n't take any cans along, but a small china pot fitted snugly into a pocket. It was labeled "Pat-o-Cheese." Billy liked cheese.

He gave another look, and decided to take the rifle. If he got lost and his food gave out, he might shoot something or other. He put some cartridges into his already bulging pockets, tied his red blanket over his shoulders, with the rifle in its roll, and decided he was ready to start.

When he took his first swing toward liberty, he thought of that other descent from the attic in far-away, peaceful Elkhurst. He reached the doorway immediately below. It showed no sign of life. Indeed, what proved to be a piece of meat hung stiff and dry from the roof. It might have been there a thousand years. But it did n't bother Billy, as he found that the flat stone near the door had no spring like the one above.

Billy jerked at his sash, hanging from above. At first the spring failed to work; but after several trials, the sash came loose, and he gathered it in.

So far he had come in Colville's tracks, and he was certain that somewhere near there must

be a doorway with another spring under a flat stone. The narrowest sort of ledge ran in front of the entrance, and Billy, at the risk of his life, took his belongings and explored. But though he could enter several dwellings, he found no more springs. The cliffs made a sharp curve here, and though Billy examined very carefully, he could not find anything by which to descend. He wondered how the Pueblos had managed, and he wished they had left some of their rope-ladders in these diggings.

"Maybe they did, and maybe they are now locked up in some 'Don't-lean-on-the-glass' case. I must have come the wrong way."

But retracing his steps round a ledge about as wide as a door-sill and by no means smooth or level was not easy. He could descend the ledge, but mounting was a different thing, and the boy decided not to attempt it. He would find some other fastening for his sash.

There was the same kind of flat stone near the entrance to the place in which Billy now

was. He found that he could secure his sash by prying up the stone with his rifle and slipping a smaller piece in the sash-hook, letting the large stone fall back into place. He let himself down; then found that he could not liberate his sash, do what he would. It hung well within reach, but was of no use. The sharp edge of the rock had sawed it in several places, and in jerking at it, it tore in his hand. Thank goodness, he had his blanket!

He tore this into four long strips, which he knotted together and brought securely through the ring that had made a former fastening with the steel hook. In doing so, he realized that he had done a thoughtless thing in fastening with the hook above, instead of with the steel ring; he could have hooked the sash on the door-sill, and thus gone down easily the rest of the way.

It was too late now. He fastened the red rope the best he could by means of the ring securely caught under the flat stone, and made another doorway.

Billy felt that he was getting somewhere, for it was only a few feet from a better ledge, extremely narrow, but enough for a lithe, light boy in search of freedom. He looked back and could see the red blanket and his blue sash. If rescue came that way, they would show a lot.

The little path wound round and up and down, stopping at doorways, going on where?

Then he came to a jumping-off place, and took his chance, landing on his side, with a bruised arm and lots of stickers.

After plunging around awhile Billy discovered what seemed to be a trail of some kind that must lead somewhere. He must leave clues, though they might be clues for Colville and capture. Then again, it might be for Pete. He marked his way with branches, twigs, notches, anything and everything.

Then he found what thousands have welcomed as the most precious thing on earth—a little cascade that jumped, crystal clear, down its own private gorge into the great cañon.

Billy drank his fill. Strength returned, and with it came nerve and courage.

On trudged the boy. Climbing, descending, resting, eating, taking care to keep water in sight. He finished his crackers and saved his little china jar of cheese. Maybe he could get a shot at something. A chipmunk was the rifle's first victim, and Billy learned that a Winchester was not meant for small game; not even the chipmunk's tail came down. Next he tried a bird in the air. It was a splendid shot, resulting in one wing feather. As he had only two more cartridges, he decided not to waste them, but kept a ready stone in hand instead.

Another day passed; another. Sleeping at night on the ground, once under a ledge of rock as he had seen Pete, Billy kept on wherever he could find a trail,—all trails lead somewhere,—but he was very tired and lonely.

If the great chasm sometimes seems big and fierce, there are middle-sized ones and baby ones that are not so awesome. Some of these Billy found filled with ferns so tall and thick

they made real jungles. In these, for clues, he cut out great bunches with his pocket-knife. Then, for a change, the next-door cañon would be as bleak as a desert, treeless, flowerless, its different-colored rocks piled one upon another as exact and as smooth as a layer-cake.

Here Billy saw more ruins of cliff-dwellers in row upon row.

"Not any more for me," said the boy, chipping pieces from the side as he went his way up, down, then up again, always nicking and chipping and breaking.

Billy was sure that he would get somewhere to some human being, but the way was very long. Whatever he found, there would he stay and rest until his father found him.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER lighting the signal-fires in the cañon that meant "Boy gone!" Pete and Jack held a long council. It was first decided that Jack ought to take the children to El Tovar and let Pete go by himself to begin the search for Billy, appointing a meeting-place for Jack and the colonel later. If Ted's father had taken Billy, as Pete thought, and was holding him prisoner in the cañon until he could bring the colonel to terms, the boy was safe. Why he had taken Billy instead of his own son Pete could not imagine.

"Ransom bigger, maybe," said Jack.

"Likely. He planned to take him all along, Jack. He had him marked from the start." He told about Hoo Lung's sash. "You find out all Hoo Lung knows as you go back. I did n't like that sash business from the first. What I don't understand is how any man could

be crazy enough invitin' the law to clap him in the pen."

"Reckon he thought the colonel 'd promise to let him go scot-free or anything, so 's he got his kid back, and pay a hefty price to boot."

"That 's about the size of it, Jack. Now let 's get all the sleep we can before daybreak. I 'm plumb wore out."

In the morning Jack asked:

"Say, do you think the man we found connected up with this any way?"

Pete slapped his forehead.

"Where 's my thinks? Jack, I believe it is the man himself. Here, let me get back there quick! Bet I 'll find that boy in one of those holes!"

"It 'll be like looking for a fishbone in a chicken wing," mused Jack, "and you 'll need all sorts of things—ropes, tools, feedings."

"I got all the tools we want. Colonel's things are all here, and I know many ways up. If Billy is caught up there, and the man 's the man who kidnapped him, he 'll show some sign,

you bet! Billy 's got a keen edge of smartness for a boy. If I don't find him, I 'll go on the reservation. Billy knows that 's our next stop, and he 's picked up so much cañon wisdom, if he 's lost, he knows a trail by sight." Pete's hopes rose faster than the sun.

"Pity we had n't thought of this when we were there," said Jack.

" 'T would n't have been any use; we had the two kids and we did n't have food or tools. Wish I had something besides the raft. It 's not fast enough." Pete thought hard, then said:

"Say, Jack, I 'll go by myself to the place we piled up the brush and search from there. Don't you dribble time going to El Tovar. Take the boys and the pack straight to the reservation. It 'll count in the end. The colonel will be there. That was the place he was to send his answer to Colville. You 'll have to face him and tell him about Billy!"

Rags and Ted now appeared. They tried to eat the breakfast Pete had prepared.

Teddy had cried so hard his nose and eyes were almost blotted out. Rags was not much better, and every few minutes he 'd wipe his eyes and try to dig up courage by tapping his head and mumbling over and over:

"He'p us fin' Billy! He'p us fin' Billy. Git us all back home safe! He'p us fin' Billy!"

The two guides rushed preparations for departure, and they let the boys help, to divert them, if nothing else. As Pete would not leave them alone for a minute, he took them when he went to the corral, where they found a surprise. Close to the fence was a muddy little heap. It was full of stickers and burs. Unknowing ones would easily have mistaken it for a brush-pile.

But Ted and Rags knew it at once. They spied a stubby white nose, they saw the flap of a short tail, and they ran whooping toward it.

Sure enough, it was Blackie, returned of his own will, and no truant son of a donkey ever received a warmer welcome. The boys patted

him and told him how glad they were to see him.

Not so Pete. It was n't so much what he said to that donkey as how he said it that made the little burro droop with such a "sorry-I-did-it" air.

"Please don't scold him, Pete!" begged Teddy. "Please don't! He 's sorry. Fellows can't help everything they do."

"Naw, sir, they can't, Marse Pete. Maybe you ain't never been a donkey; but I knows. They jes must have a free kick once in a while, same as boys an' colts and ca'ves."

"All right, I 'll let him off this time; but what I 'll do to him the next 'll be 'bout a bushel and a half."

"Now the next thing ought to be Reddy coming back and telling us where to find Billy," said Ted, tears again beginning to overflow.

"We 'll find Billy all right, you bet," said Pete, inspiring a confidence he was far from feeling.

The boys helped the men load the mules and burros, tying the ropes with the diamond-hitch Pete had taught them, and what with the guide's infectious courage and the extra splendor that the cañon put on, their spirits rose, and by the time Pete was ready to leave them they showed some of their earlier enthusiasm. As the pack-train climbed the trail leading out of the gorge, both boys looked back and cried:

"Good-by, *our cañon!* Good-by!"

Pete lost no time setting out, but despite steady progress, it was a whole day's trip to the grave under the cliffs, as he had to be on the lookout for signs and tokens every step of the way. He discovered nothing, and when he reached the green mound everything was undisturbed. With keen eyes he looked everywhere. It grew rapidly dark, but Pete, tired as he was, would not sleep yet. Billy had been gone three whole days. If he had a light, and was left alone in one of those hundreds of holes, he would be sure to show it.

Wildcat Pete

Pete let himself sleep only in patches, getting up every half-hour or so to seek a light and sound his bugle. As soon as morning came he took rope, tools, and food, and set forth. First he blew the camp-call to breakfast on his bugle. It might bring Billy to one of the doorways. But it did n't.

Then he walked carefully around, eyeing the cliffs, trying to find a bit of rope which would show the spot from which the man had fallen to his death. It was so much the color of things around it that Pete all but missed it; it was only by living up to his name that he got to the spot. He clutched at jagged edges, crept, crawled, and at last reached the rope-end, and entered an empty chamber. The rope had broken off near the end, and the piece was fastened in a curious and rather ingenious catch. Pete soon solved its working and held the piece free, but felt that he was no nearer his object than before. The man had certainly been here, but had he taken Billy? Might not the boy

have met with some accident entirely unconnected with this man who might be Ted's father?

Then Pete made his way to the doorway directly above. There was no catch under the stone here, so the man must have made a detour in descending, or had never been farther up.

Pete blew his bugle and called, but only echoes answered. He investigated as many dwellings as he could before sundown; then, when night and darkness stopped him, curled up and slept like the dead. In the morning he started afresh, looking at every flat stone in every doorway. At one place the wall of the cañon rounded suddenly, and Pete saw something that brought a cry of joy—a faint strip of color that crossed the rock strata at right angles, and, yes, fluttered.

Pete was soon under it, and saw that the lower part was red, and that the upper was blue shading to pink. Billy's sash! He called, blew his bugle; still only echoes. Well, the boy might be hurt and unable to move. It

took the guide only a minute to swing himself up by the red streamer to another perfectly empty dwelling. Billy had evidently been there, for there was his sash and one of the camp blankets; but above the cliff was a straight, smooth slab. Not even a cat's namesake could climb it. So he swung down again. He was sure from the marks around that some sort of a trail must lead from there, and he picked his way carefully from hole to hole, seeking it and the boy. Then he found a line, no more than a thread at the beginning, but widening as he climbed. This path must lead somewhere. Should he leave the red-and-blue signal and follow this path, or should he try more holes?

He decided that he ought to do both and was about climbing to another level when something caught his keen eye. It was a real mark. On a piece of sharp rock was a bit of flannel, and it was khaki-colored and about of the texture of the shirts that both the boys and the colonel constantly wore.

Pete did not have to scale the cliffs again. He followed the small path. It entered a wood. The ground was too hard for footprints, but he saw a trail, saw also the broken twigs, the crushed leaves, the snapped-off branches.

"Hooray! I 'm on the right track!" shouted Pete. "Good for Billy! He 's left clues!"

On went the guide, and came to water; saw where Billy had drunk and rested. The footprints on the bank were clearly those of the boy. They were n't guides' or Indians' feet or grown tourists', they were boy's.

"Them feetprints is fresh and *his!*" exclaimed Pete.

What a brave boy it was, first to escape from a stone wall hundreds of feet high and then to find a trail and leave clues! It was the steepest sort of travel, but he had gone right on. Some birds in the path flew at Pete's approach. He stopped and found cracker-crumbs.

"Hi-yi! Camp biscuits! He ain't starved!"

Pete's heart had n't thumped so hard since

a long-ago day when he won a famous cow-boy race. He pressed on. The path became steeper, and the young wanderer had evidently been bewildered. Sometimes the footprints went round in a circle, but there was always something left to show. When they stopped, Pete could see where the boy had rested, maybe spent the night. Here was a hummock of leaves in a hollow, and some distance away was a ledge of rock that had a fresh mark gash on it.

"He slep' here, same as he seen me," said Pete. "Wished I had a drove of kids just like him."

Night came, and the guide was forced to rest, but at the first glimmer he was up and on. For a long space there was no clue, but the trail was plain, and growing broader all the time. He could not miss it. Pete's tension put him almost in a fever.

"But the trail is so plain," argued Pete, "we could n't have missed it."

Something by a little stream caught the

guide's quick eye. It was of white china, and it had a label:

"Pat-o-Cheese. Made in Maine."

And that was the last clue Pete found or looked for; a few steps more, and there was the boy himself, worn, in rags, gaunt, and so weak that he lay full length on the ground.

He looked vacantly at the guide.

"Billy boy, don't you know me? Pete?"

"He got away," whispered Billy; "but he 's catching up with me. Must go on! Must nick rocks all the time. Father 'll be waiting."

"Yes, sirree, he 'll be waiting! I 'm taking you to him with wings on my feet," cried the joyful Pete.

"Are you old Taylor? How 's Wat's stings? I got out of that attic all right. Went to the den, but there were n't any candles, so I sent Snap for 'em."

"That was fine, Partner," said Pete. "Here, drink this," and he gave him a sip of the coffee in his flask. "Pearter now, ain't you? Here 's some bread. Not so fast, General."

Pete fed him in small bits. When he thought he had had enough, Pete gathered him into his big, strong arms and let him sleep. Then a million stars began to twinkle. With his one free hand Wildcat Pete lifted his wide-brimmed hat, and sweepingly saluted the silent majestic cliffs.

"Thanks! Thanks, one and all! It 's the bulliest Christmas gift ever handed out to a mule-drivin' orphant, and blest if I ain't going to carry this chap on my back every step of the way to the reservation!"

CHAPTER XIV

FROM Camp Jolly to the reservation was a two-days' journey. The campers could stop where they pleased, eat when they pleased, and sleep without a roof of any kind. Some of the things that Pete had told about in his stories they were really to do.

"If we only had Billy!" sighed Ted. "Do you think he 's with Pete by this time, Jack?"

"Sure," said Jack. "Now you two boys get all the fun you can. You 'll be relatin' this journey to Billy to-morrow—maybe."

So they believed, and became frisky and happy once more.

"I wish we could come back and stay a year," said Ted.

"So do I, but we 'll go home and git mammy an' Mis' Hargrave fust."

"Anyhow, I 'd like to take one cañon home with us; we could put it in the cow-lot and see it every day. Would n't that be jolly, Rags?"

"Don't know 'bout that," answered Rags, cautiously. "That cañon 's fat with surprisin's, an' sho as you live, she 's gwine to split some day, an' then what?"

At first the going was smooth and easy; later the trail grew rough and ugly. It climbed up, slid down, and curved back on itself. At times it was a guess whether the boys and burros were riding on a trail or teetering on a wobbly see-saw. The roughness kept up all day; so did the sun. It shone twice as long up here as in the cañon, and was so hot it drew blisters in patterns on necks and arms.

There was little complaining. Each boy gritted his teeth, and took his jolts without a moan. They were trying to copy those men in Pete's stories.

Late evening brought them to the edge of a cliff.

"Lawzy me! that ridge looks like it 's been

runnin' th'ough mammy's flutin'-iron, it 's so wavy."

"Everything 's wavy," said Ted.

"Is you tired, Honey? Po' lil Teddy boy!" Rags was glad he had been the first to cry off.

"Say, Rags, you stop talking to me like I was a baby. I can ride as far as you can."

" 'Co'se you kin; but I bets you can't count er hund'ed front part hindmost, befo' we gits to the hitchin'-post."

The guide had overheard, so he stopped at once. It was a good leg-stretching time for boys and animals. In a twinkle Jack was ready with what the boys called a "tin-can supper," and almost before the scraps were cleared away the two weary children were rolled in blankets, with the ground for a mattress and the sky for a ceiling, fast asleep in the biggest outdoors they ever knew.

Jack waited until the boys were settled, and then walked quietly among the animals. A fat burro stretched in the sand seemed to be just what he wanted. He sat down close,

made a back-rest of the donkey's round body, and with hands resting on his rifle let one eye doze while the other kept watch.

If he had been alone, he would not have so much as unstrapped his gun. Like Pete, he feared neither two- nor four-legged things.

"I ain't a-carin' for my own carcass, but when I turns guide, I puts it up as bond for the other fellers, an' there 's too many stories floatin' round lately of mounting wolves friskin' in these parts an' a handful or so of bad Indians that 's been makin' things lively roun' here of late."

But nothing came near except a sniffing coyote, which ran like mad at a whispered "Scat!"

Before the sun was up, another animal came, ran straight to the boys, and before Jack could interfere was licking their faces.

"If it is n't old Reddy!" cried Ted, awakening. "Where on earth have you been?"

Reddy wagged his tail knowingly; he knew

what he knew. At present he was hungry. The boys being in like condition, Jack made the fire and cooked, and as fast as he cooked just so fast did food disappear. Being the hero of the hour, Reddy was given the seat of honor. The boys draped his neck with a napkin, and fed him with a spoon. That was fun enough, but when Reddy, forgetting his manners, stood up and licked the corned-beef platter clean, there was nothing for the boys to do but roll over and over with laughter.

So a day of big promises began. Jokes hopped up like old times. Had n't Jack told them that Billy was safe, and would n't he be glad to have Reddy back!

"We 'll have to change his name, though," said Rags. "He was n't ready to leave us, but he went, an' he 's back, and there 's no tellin' when he 'll be somewhere else. 'Off ag'in, on ag'in, gone ag'in' is the name for that dog, sho."

Long before the sun reddened the sands the party mounted and were away. Now there

was nothing to look at, not even a butterfly for Reddy to chase.

"Jack, what 's a reservating?" asked Ted.

"You mean a reservation? That 's where Uncle Sam turns his 'dopted children out to pasture," said the guide, with a grin.

"Bet I knows that uncle," said Rags. "It 's the Government's boss."

"Aw, Boberty, even a kitten knows who Uncle Sam is. But can children live on pastures like you said, Jack?"

"They have to. They 're Indians. Uncle Sam rounds up the herd of Hopis and Mokis and other tribes, runs them into a pasture, and calls it a reservation," said Jack.

"Can't the Indians get away if they want to?"

"Maybe, if the agent says so. That 's where we 're going now."

"Well, I hope every one of them Injuns is hitched to a stump," said Rags. "Is they, Marse Jack?"

"You 'll soon find out for yourselves. See

them smoke patches over there? It won't be long before we 'll light and hitch at the reservation's front door. Look at that dog!"

Reddy sniffed the air and then raced out of sight.

"Where 's he gone now?" asked Ted.

The question was soon answered. The travelers halted in a grove of silvery cottonwoods, and a young Indian came to meet them with a group of white guides and stalwart young fellows in khaki.

Reddy was rolling over and over with delight.

"Him my dog," said the Indian, and then turned and spoke in his own tongue to Jack.

"He says," translated the guide, "that Reddy, as you call him, is the tramp dog of the cañon and sort of polices things, takes up with people in any old place, and has masters everywhere; but that he is really his dog and always comes back to him."

The Indian nodded, and said something else.

"He says, too, that that dog knows more se-

crets than all the prospectors that ever dug in the cañon. He knows where gold is, and water and specimens."

The Indian nodded again, and again said something.

Jack laughed, and shook his head.

"What did he say then, Jack?" asked Ted.

"I ain't goin' to tell you that," said Jack, but both the boys knew that it was nothing disagreeable.

The young soldiers then went back with the party. The colonel, they told Jack, had taken another search-party out, but would be back by night for reports. Not a word had been heard from Colville, the trouble-maker, but it was hoped that he would be rounded up in good shape.

Jack told him of his and Pete's suspicions, and of the disappearance of the colonel's own son instead of the nephew.

"Well, the colonel can't be doing more than he is now, son or nephew. But I 'm awful sorry for him."

"Yes, but don't you show a wink of it to the boys; I've just got them happy again."

In a little while the children forgot everything but what their eyes were seeing. From every direction there came running towards them big Indians, little Indians, and middle-sized Indians, women with roly-poly babies tied on their backs, tall boys and short ones, men in blue shirts and red shirts over buckskin trousers.

As they ran every Indian was calling, "Umpi-tuhs! Umpi-tuhs!" It sounded like a baby thunder-storm.

"What do they mean?" asked Ted.

"You have arrived," said Jack.

"They ain't no call to tell us that," said Rags.

Every visitor was welcome, but the crowd around Jack proved that the Indians knew him for a good friend and that he knew them all by name.

"Hello, Redfeather! Hi, Swift Wing!

Well, well, if that ain't old Sam and Cheerful Chollie!"

Then he swung a small brown boy up to his shoulder, the one that Reddy had recognized as his master. "How 's Slim Hole in the Chin? What 's your pup's name, Chinny?"

"Tiyo," said the lad, looking with glad eyes at the leaping dog.

"Tie-her 's a good name for it," said Ted. "It 's the only way I know to keep him."

Then Jack called each visitor by name, and there was much accompanying ceremony. Teddy whispered to Rags:

"What are they grunting so much for? Is that the way they talk?"

"How 'd I know? Pigs is the onliest grunters I knows. 'Sides, I ain't mindin' 'bout that. I 's askin' is them Injun tommyhawks jest ornamints?"

At this point a tall man made a sign, and the smiling, grunting crowd followed him. He led the strangers through the grove into the villages and up to the door of an Indian

house: Before this door stood the big chief of the tribe, feathered head-dress, beaded coat, weapons, and all, the best real-picture Indian anybody would wish to see.

Teddy and Rags stood close to Jack, their eyes opened to their widest. They turned shivery when they saw Jack push to the front and, going straight to the big chief, slap him on the shoulder in the friendliest sort of way.

"Hello, Chief! I 've fetched these boys to meet the pale chief here. Can you put us up for a night or so?"

The chief nodded, and intimated that he would speak to the boys.

It was n't easy to go close to a has-been-great warrior with a scarred face and a fierce look, but the two locked arms and did their best.

The chief solemnly shook their hands. The long something he said might have been words; it sounded like a whole cage of growling animals. No wonder his name was Three Bears.

Neither of the boys understood a word Three Bears growled, but Jack did. He said

Three Bears was glad the colonel's party had come just when they did. The gods brought luck to them. The colonel would come back that night, and to-morrow there would be a great religious ceremony calling upon the rain-god to save their crops, and at night they would give their most splendid dance in honor of the spider woman.

"Who 's she?" Ted ventured to ask. And Jack told them she was the lady spirit who weaved the clouds so as to squeeze rain out of them.

The chief then said that he hoped the colonel's children would rest well and that as the sports would begin early next day, Cheerful Chollie would show them where the colonel and his party were quartered.

Then down the crooked village street they went, the bright clothing of the Indians making it very gay. The crowd grunted a welcome as the guide and the boys passed, and some of them even smiled to see how close the boys kept to Jack.

"Jack," said Ted, "Billy and me both thought Indians lived in wigwams. Some of these things are sure-enough houses."

"Indians live 'cordin' to their raisin', Teddy boy. Hopis is mostly house-dwellers, Navasupis and Navajos are tenters; you 'll see 'em all here. They 've come for the doings of tomorrow."

"Are we going to be housers or tenters?"

Jack smiled as Chollie stopped beside a group of tents and lifted the flap of one.

"Oh, a really, truly wigwam just like the ones we read about! Look, Rags! And, oh, are n't these bully?" Ted was holding up a striped blanket, and pointing to a huge water-jar near some strange ornaments.

"Say, Ted, don' you be so peart, projickin' roun' these heathenish doin's. It 's plain dangerous."

"Aw, what you afraid of? I just love Indians, don't you?"

"I ain't sayin'. Seem like I kind o' los' my tase for 'em, they so streaky."

Just then he spied one of the dancing men passing the door. His face was striped with green and yellow paint. Rags got well out of sight.

"Oh, there 's uncle," cried Ted as the crowd made a passage for the tall soldier, who came hurrying toward the wigwam.

The colonel rushed to Ted.

"You got him! Where? He 's all right?"

"Oh, Uncle Tom, we 've had 'ventures, all sorts of them, and we 'll have to take almost a month to tell them; and Billy got lost, and by this time he 's with Pete, Jack says. But they have n't got here yet."

With a ghastly look the colonel turned to the guide. Jack gave a significant glance at the children, and in a hearty tone, so that they could hear, said:

"Yes, he 's with Pete by this time. But come with me, sir. There 's business to talk."

Taking the colonel aside, he told the tale as he knew it. The father's face grew stern and hard.

"If that man has harmed my boy he shall be hunted the earth over."

"Me and Pete think death 's hunted him," said Jack as he told the other tale of finding the man who had fallen and met his end. "Pete 's searching the cliffs now. Then he 's coming here."

It was now almost night, but the sun had cast a farewell slant down the trail leading to the cañon. Everything was red and gold. Then an Indian runner pushed through the crowd. Saluting the colonel, he said a few words.

"He wants us to go with him."

Jack and the boys followed the colonel to where some men in khaki stood on the edge of the ravine. One handed him a field-glass.

"What do you see?"

The colonel looked, and saw dots on the trail all running downward; looked farther, saw another dot coming slowly and wearily up to meet them. On they came until they met. The dots became men. They were carrying

something in a blanket. Now the faces could be seen, and the colonel let the glass fall and sat down suddenly on the ground.

"Go to them, Jack, and bring me word. I—I can't look!"

Jack soon returned, and with him Pete carrying Billy, weak, but himself. Glad arms reached for him, and Pete was hammered with questions, but waved everybody aside.

"Colonel, you 've got the zip-bangest boy in the whole country, but he needs rest. Let 's get him to bed. By morning he 'll be just as good as new."

"Hooray for our side!" shouted Teddy and Rags, turning handsprings in circles.

Then Hole-in-the-Chin brought a message from the chief, saying that he had heard of Billy's escape unaided from the cliff-dwellings, and was so pleased that if the boy would join the tribe he might be a chief some day himself.

"Tell him 'No, thank you,' " said Billy, taking his mouth from a tall glass of milk only long enough to speak.

"Wait till you see who you is sendin' messages to," cautioned Rags.

But Billy only grinned, dug his head into the pillow, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XV

THE next day was like old times for joy and wonder. Billy was almost himself, and could neither stop eating nor talking. The experiences of the last few days had been pretty rough for him. His father did not wish him to talk about it yet. It was just as well that the happenings in the village were more than enough to occupy his mind.

Inside and out the settlement was like a circus come to town. Visiting Indians came by the wagonload, or maybe two or three to one pony-back. Men peddled trinkets, children got lost, and dogs scrapped over bones. At the end of the crooked street the games had begun. The moving crowd was as bright as a waving rainbow, and the people laughed, clapped their hands, and shouted in evidence of the general happiness.

The Indians had heard all about Billy.

They showed great curiosity about him. Every man and boy wanted a good look, and as they came up to take it each one made the same kind of a grunt and used his hands in the same way.

"What do them grunts mean, Marse Pete?" asked Rags.

Pete laughed.

"They 's callin' you names, admirin' ones somethin' like 'Slippery Slide-down-a-cliff,' 'Eat-all-the-time,' 'Can't-catch-me,' 'Colonel's Billee.' "

"Whoopee!" cried Ted. "Your name 's nowhere, Rags."

"Aw, what you talkin', Teddy! Them 's jes Injun names. Robert Lee Abr'm Lincum George Washington Sherman 's writ all over me an' mo' monumints 'n we can count," said Rags, proudly.

For the games the kind and friendly Indians had put Teddy and Rags and Billy where they could see everything. There were blankets for them to sit on, even a rest for their backs.

But what boy could think of sitting down for the littlest minute? An antelope-race and a corn-scramble was going on right before their eyes. They simply had to stand up and yell. In the antelope race ten young Indian boys had run far across the hot sands; they were coming down the stretch; their feet barely touched the earth. Almost abreast, they seemed to be flying. The smallest boy put on speed. He gained, passed the goal, and stood before the priests a winner. It was Hole-in-the-Chin. Spikes could n't have held Ted and Billy and Rags in their seats.

Behind the racers came more boys. Their hands were filled with corn-stalks, melon-vines, and fruit. It was part of the game for the women and girls to snatch these away. As the corn-stalk-bearers held tight, and the girls fought hard, it made a rough scramble. The fun ended when the lads' hands were empty.

Now came the rooster-game. An Indian walked before the crowd; in his hand he held a rooster made of clay. Digging a hole in the

sand, he buried the mud chicken, leaving only its gaily painted head sticking high up.

The play was for a man on a running horse to seize this head, break it off, leaving the other part in the hole.

At one end of the course many horsemen were gathered. They were gorgeously dressed. Silk bands tied their black hair. Leather belts and big silver ornaments held in place the loin-cloths of brightest colors. Without a bridle and without a saddle, the Indians sat on their plunging horses as easy as Rags could have sat in a rocking-chair.

At a signal the rider darted from the group, leaning far over, one hand grasping the mane of his pony. With the other the rider made a sudden sweep at the painted rooster's head. He missed, dashed on. Another rider was at his heels, and another, and another, till at last a skilful fellow gave a lucky twist, and bore the trophy to the judges.

The boys could hardly believe these horsemen were human. They could stick on stand-

ing as well as sitting. It seemed as easy for them to ride underneath the flying horse as on his back. They only laughed when the pony bucked or reared, and stepped aside nimbly if he fell backward.

"Jiminy, Rags, are n't they the best riders anybody ever saw? What keeps them from falling and hurting themselves?" exclaimed Billy.

" 'Co'se they can't get hurted, Billy. Ain't you nebber heard of Injun rubber? Dat 's whut dey 's made outer. Lawsy! look a-comin!" shouted Rags.

"Oh, what are they?" asked Ted, creeping closer to Pete, and pointing to four or five two-legged beings in hideous masks and clownish clothes.

"Them 's dancin' guys," answered Pete. "They 's called Katchinas. They stands for the spirits of dead Indians. They comes to earth once a year. When they goes home they takes with them all the live Indians' prayers for rain."

Faster and faster the Katchinas swayed their bodies, swung their arms, and stamped their feet as the drum-man pounded his drum and the musicians howled.

"Gracious! look at those walking barber-poles coming!" Billy pointed, staring at some men with bodies painted red and white. Strings of beads hung from their necks, and in their hands were strange-looking whips.

"Hush, Billy!" warned Pete. "Time to keep still. Them 's the high priests. They 's awful solemn when they goes to dance to the spider woman."

The middle of the night could n't have been stiller. The priests marched by. They were on their way to a hidden silver altar and secret ceremonies.

Then came the feast, songs, and many dances. In one laughing happy crowd sat Billy and Ted and Rags. They were watching some Indians do a war-dance.

"Say, Rags," whispered Ted, "you can beat that dancing all to pieces. Why don't you?"

"You stop a-coaxin' me, Ted. I ain't wantin' to make them Injun gemmen feel bad."

"Go on, Rags!" urged Billy. "You can dance awful' pretty."

Pete, hearing this, saw fun ahead. He joined in:

"Say, kid. Give you this if you 'll get out there and dance." Rags's eager eyes looked at something in Pete's hand.

"Aw, shoo, Marse Pete! Dollar ain't nothin' but a growed-up nickel. But you 's de boss. Ef I has to, I has to. Come on, chilluns. You has to pat for me."

Colonel Hargrave was talking business to the big chief. Both men were solemn and earnest.

All at once Colonel Hargrave began to laugh. The more he looked, the more he laughed. Three Bears thought his guest had gone crazy. Then *he* looked. What he saw made him almost smile.

In the middle of a big crowd of Indians was

Rags. His nimble feet twisted and twinkled as he danced the Mobile Buck. Ted and Billy furnished the music. They clapped their hands, and sang in perfect time:

"I dances like a gemmen, yes I *do;*
I ain't very pretty, but needer is *you.*
Ole Mister Rabbit he make a good *stew;*
I 's gwine to eat him when I is through."

The Indians were delighted. They tried to join in the song. They could only do the clapping. And Rags danced on and on till Pete seized him by the arm and gave him his dollar.

"Hey, kid; time 's up. We got to hike it for base. Here 's your coin! Get your traps."

In the shortest time Colonel Hargrave and the boys and Pete were saying good-by to this Indian and that, shaking hands with the men, bowing to the women, and throwing pennies to the scrambling children. Hole-in-the-Chin and Cheerful Charlie held the bridles of

the burros. There were lumps in somebody's throat as Billy and Rags gave Reddy a big hug. Hole-in-the-Chin and Cheerful Charlie helped the boys to their burros. There was a waving of hands and farewell shouts. Then the travelers faced about and started homeward. Looking back, the crowd of Indians were only a spot of color on the far-off sands.

One night more in the open, a long ride through a forest of pines, then once again the campers were guests of the splendid El Tovar Hotel, planted on a rock high in the air.

Another hour and Colonel Hargrave, Teddy, Billy, and Rags stood on the rear platform of the Sunset Special; they were saying good-by to Pete.

"Come see us, Pete. Please do! We 'll take you to the moving-pictures," Billy promised.

"And a circus," added Ted.

"Yes, sir, Marse Pete, you come. Mammy 'll make us a barrel plumb full o' flapjacks. They 've got some sho' 'nough chew in 'em."

"That fetches me; I accept the invite. Anything else I can do for you, Colonel?"

"Nothing, thank you. What is it, Billy?"

For Billy was calling something from the car-window.

"And, Pete, say, if you 're passing that way ever, won't you please get my sash for me? I want it to play cow-boy with."

The train went beyond Pete's reply, but he seemed to nod assent, and the boys settled themselves for the trip home.

"Won't mother be surprised when she hears about our adventures?" asked Billy. "She does n't know a thing yet, does she, Father?"

"She 's probably reading an account in the newspapers now," said the colonel.

"Is it in the papers?" cried the trio. "Show us! Let us see!"

The morning papers had something about the Hargrave party. Some of it was so funny that Billy did not know whether to laugh or scoff. "What a whopper!" he 'd cry at one

paragraph. "How 'd they find that out?" at another.

"Why did n't they say a lot more about Pete?" demanded Billy.

"And whyfo'," asked Rags, with a long, comical face, "did n' it tell 'bout me and Teddy 'n de ragin' river?"

"Never mind, boys. You can tell it much better than the papers. You can entertain your mothers and friends while I am away."

"Is you goin' back to the cañon, Marse Tom, after you gets us safe back home?"

"Not this trip. Washington is sending me elsewhere. You know this country may soon be involved in the Great War."

When the boys awoke in Louisville there was growing excitement. They changed cars, and soon came nearer to Elkhurst station. Necks craned out of windows as the train slowed down.

"There 's the same old wagon with the same old mule," said Billy.